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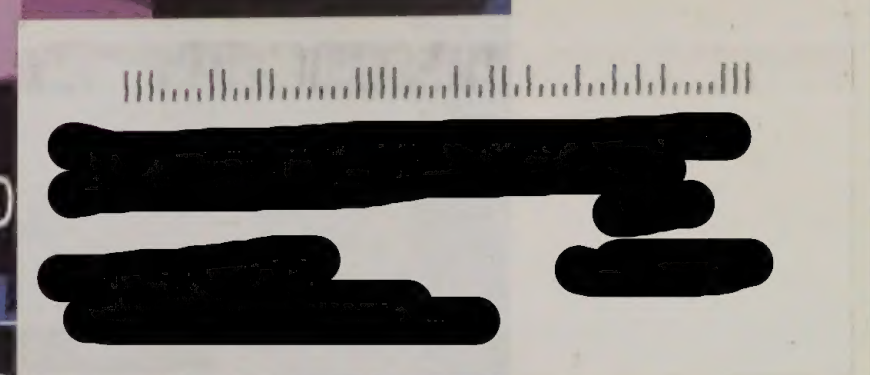


Niko Bellic Stars
In Rockstar's
Gritty Take On The
American Dream

ISSUE 169 MAY 2007

grand theft auto IV

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SCREENS & DETAILS ON
THE BIGGEST GAME OF 2007



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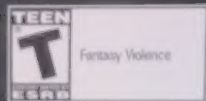
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To dig deeper, visit na.square-enix.com/dawnofmana



PlayStation 2

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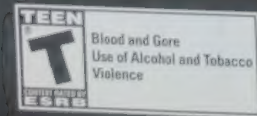
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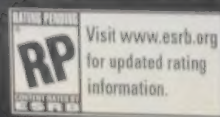
MIDWAY

The Lord of the Rings Online

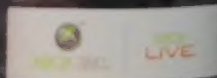
Shadows of Angmar

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PLAYSTATION 3



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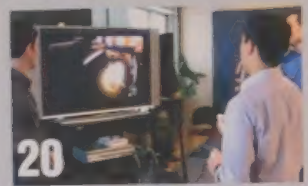
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What more do we need to say? Developer/publisher Rockstar opened its doors to us, and we came out with the story. We have the world-exclusive first look at the next incarnation of the undisputed biggest franchise in gaming. Get the first real details on Grand Theft Auto IV right here, right now.



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THIS MAN LOVES SHEEP.



AND THAT IS COMPLETELY NORMAL. HE HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE HEALTH AND PROTECTION OF THESE TRUSTING, SOFT, SWEET, WOOL-GIVING CREATURES. HE IS A DECENT MAN. SO JUST CALM DOWN, HE HAS A GIRLFRIEND.

KEEP *it* CLEAN.



Old Spice

STAFF

People Who Actually Get Paid To Play Video Games



THREE MILLION GAMERS CAN'T BE WRONG

ANDY McNAMARA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I find it funny that almost daily I read about how print is dead on some Internet site. It's like they have nothing better to do than belittle their competition, rather than compete.

To the naysayers: Magazines are here to stay, whether the Internet likes it or not. I realize that the reverse is also true; the Internet is a big part of how gamers get their information and discuss the issues of the day. Yet, I see this argument come up often, and I have never quite understood the giant battle between the two.

People ask me how I feel about how the Internet has changed video game reporting, half expecting me to start a grumpy tirade—complete with the “in my day, we walked uphill, both ways, in the snow to get to school” anecdote. This is simply not the case. I think the Internet just gives us more ways to communicate with gamers, and for gamers to communicate with each other, which in the end makes it easier to make a better magazine.

I actually enjoy the avenues that open up to us when creating a magazine. In the early days of Game Informer, we spent a lot of time and effort cramming as much news into an issue as we possibly could. Thankfully, regurgitating every minor press release is no longer our charge. Magazines are about the big picture. This lets us do more in-depth reporting and analysis. We can look at what is and what isn't important to the gamer today, and find the stories that we think are shaping gaming now and for the future.

I think we are accomplishing this goal. As of this issue, Game Informer will send magazines to 3 million gamers. For those of you keeping score at home, that's the biggest video game magazine in the world...and by a wide margin.

And of course, this month we have the biggest story in video games gracing our cover: Grand Theft Auto IV. Game Informer will always have the biggest stories on the biggest games, and I can promise you that we will work harder than ever to make sure that no matter what the Internet says, magazines are still here to report on games unlike anyone else, and before anyone else.

Enjoy the issue.

Andy >> andy@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** 24, Guitar Hero Mastery (Damn You Solos On Expert Damn You To Hell!), 300, Bone (The Comic, And Take Your Mind Out Of The Guitar) **Dislikes:** Final Fantasy XII Bugging Out And Refusing To Let Me Bring Up The Menu Where You Change Your Gambits And Inventory (And Yes, I Mean That One Where You Do Basically Everything) Two Hours Away From The End **Current Favorite Games:** God Of War II, World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade, Guitar Hero II (Box 360)



Reiner >> reiner@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Action, First-Person Shooters, Strategy, Sports, Fighting **Interests:** PlayStation 3's Home (BBQs Every Day At My Place!), Randomly Injecting “Bo Knows” And “Where's The Beef” Into Serious Conversations, Patrick Stewart On Edros (Funniest Thing Ever!) **Dislikes:** Being A Part Of A Two-Hour Discussion On The Search For Spock, The Punisher's New Stars & Stripes Costume, SD Television (Get With The Times, People) **Current Favorite Games:** Grand Theft Auto IV, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2, God Of War II, Earth Defense Force 2017



Matt >> matt@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Action/Platform, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** Notorious B.I.G. – “Things Done Changed,” The O'Jays – “Backstoppers,” Steely Dan – “The Royal Scam,” Richard Hell And The Voidoids – “Betrayal Takes Two,” John Lennon – “How Do You Sleep?” **Dislikes:** That Fall Out Boy Cellophone Commercial With The Jock Dude, Mid-Season Heroes Hiatus, High Cholesterol (No More Fast Food...The Ramifications Are Still Sinking In) **Current Favorite Games:** FEAR: First Encounter Assault Recon, Kororinpa: Marble Mania, Gears Of War, God Of War



Kato >> kato@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** Pens Staying Put In Pitt, Whistling In Public (People Immediately Get Suspicious), How A Wisconsinite Like Billy Can Support A Minnesota Team (Like Most Of Them, He Wants To Be Minnesota. Sorry Dude) **Dislikes:** The Remote Control Consortium Keeping Prices High (Are They Controlling The Market? Of Course They Are. They Aren't Called The Remote Control Consortium For Nothing) **Current Favorite Games:** All-Pro Football 2K8, DIRT, Stuntman: Ignition, Jam Sessions



Adam >> adam@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Alpha Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, First-Person Shooters, Fighting **Interests:** Fantasy Baseball Drafts, Playing Baseball With New And Improved Lung Power, Trolling The Warlock Boards (Note To Lords: You're Still Overpowered), Eating Things That Are Delicious **Dislikes:** When Delicious Things Make My Tummy Asplode, Websites That Don't Work With Firefox (Cmon, Like Anybody Uses IE Any More), Trying To Convince My PS2 To Not Look Horrid On My HDTV **Current Favorite Games:** Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars, S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow Of Chernobyl, World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade, Lumines Live



Joe >> joe@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Real American Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Adventure, Action, Strategy, Puzzle **Interests:** Tearing Through 24 Like A Machine, XKCD, 300, Hiding Crappy Games (Like Fuzion Frenzy 2) On People's Desks, The Great Game Informer Ban-Off **Dislikes:** Chocobos, Waiting To Conquer The Universe In Spore (My Guys Are Going To Have So Many Mouths), Mrs. Luthor, No New 2D Metroid **Current Favorite Games:** Mass Effect, God Of War II, Final Fantasy XII, Titan Quest: Immortal Throne, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, Earth Defense Force 2017



Miller >> miller@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Once And Future Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Adventure, Fighting, Platform, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** Lunch Negotiations (We'll Never Come Together Until We Learn To Understand Each Other In Multilateral Talks), Jack Bauer's Body Count (He May Very Well Be Considered A Serial Killer In Some Cultures), The Popcorn Fairy (Please Visit Our Office Again!) **Dislikes:** Joe Pushing Fuzion Frenzy 2 Like It's A Drug, Snow Shoveling In March, Tax Preparation (Still Not As Bad As Fuzion Frenzy 2) **Current Favorite Games:** Fallout, Final Fantasy XII, Crackdown, God Of War II, Dig Dug



Bertz >> mattbertz@gameinformer.com

Handle: Lord Garmington III **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Sports, Action, RPGs, Strategy **Interests:** 300, Final Episodes Of The Sopranos, Andrew Bird's Armchair Apocrypha, Pending Ted Leo Concert, St. Patrick's Day Festivities **Dislikes:** Fighting Off Bryan's Sickness, Missing Shane MacGowan Performing From A Wheelchair On St. Patrick's Day, Missing St. Patrick's Day Altogether Due To Bryan's Sickness **Current Favorite Games:** Crackdown, S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow Of Chernobyl, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2, The Elder Scrolls IV: Shivering Isles



Ben >> ben@gameinformer.com

Handle: Your Friendly Neighborhood Gamer **Expertise:** Action/Adventure, Action/RPGs, Platform, Survival Horror, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** Deadpool (Marvel Should Let Me Write Him), Rome Season One, 300 (And Seeing It For Free), Band Of Brothers, Arrested Development, Extras **Dislikes:** The Death Of Captain America And The Fact That Reiner Is Happy About It (Get Him, Readers), The Smell Of Lukewarm Ketchup That Has Been Sitting Out All Day, Chad (What A Jerkhead) **Current Favorite Games:** Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters, Crackdown, Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin, The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, Splinter Cell: Double Agent



Bryan >> bryan@gameinformer.com

Handle: The Gamer's Advocate **Expertise:** Action/Adventure, RPGs, Survival Horror, First-Person Shooters, Rhythm **Interests:** Shamrock Shakes, 300, Showing The Old-Timers (Kato And Matt) What The Kids Are Listening To, Timing How Long It Takes Until Their Headphones Go Flying Across The Bullpen **Dislikes:** That Ru That's Going Around (Okay, So Maybe I Started It), The Fact That I Curse Every PSP I Touch, That Extras Is Ending **Current Favorite Games:** Super Paper Mario, LittleBigPlanet, Kororinpa: Marble Mania, The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess, TMNT 1989 Arcade

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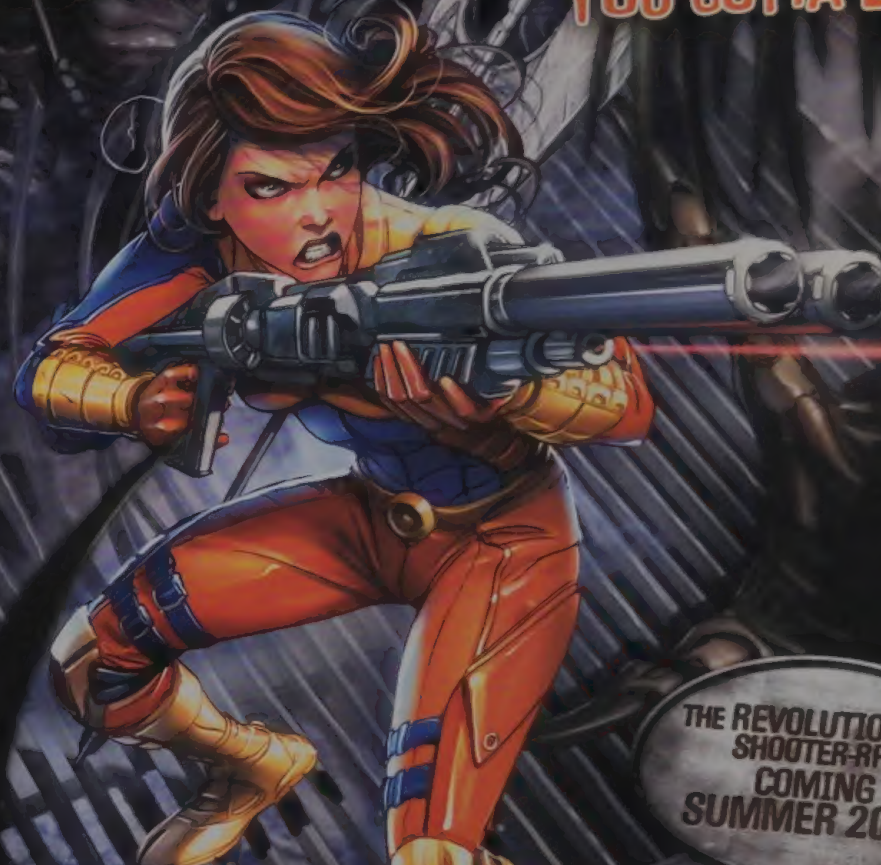
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1 Billy snuggles up to The Legend of Zelda kingpin Eiji Aonuma at GDC 2 Freelance journalist Scott Jones hangs with Konami PR maestro Marc Franklin 3 Publisher Gamecock welcomes attendees to its GDC party in memorable fashion! Watch for Cirque de Soleil: Dorque coming to a city near you 4 Andy and Bryan max, relax, ill, and chill with LucasArts' Chris Baker and Adam Kahn 5 Jurassic 5 and Ozomatli DJ Cut Chemist spins end-to-end burners at Sony's GDC party 6 Billy with his posse: Konami's Kyoko Fukuhara, Bender/Helper's Adam Fenton, Elebits creator Shingo Mukaitoge (holding Flat Stanley), Bender/Helper's Marisa Gross, and our own Adam! 7 Former GI editor Jay Fitzloff, now of Sandbox Strat, accepts a regal greeting from Sony's Mariam Sughayer 8 Just another day of "work" for Game Informer editor Bryan Vore, pictured here working on a story about PlayStation 3 backwards compatibility



STOP THE SPREAD OF EVIL

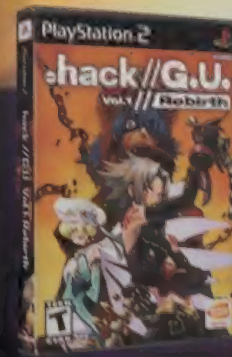
THE YEAR IS 2017, AND SERVERS OF THE POPULAR VIDEO GAME

"THE WORLD" ARE INFECTED WITH A DANGEROUS ENTITY.

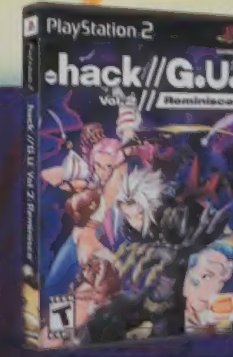
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GI COMMUNITY

Game Informer has a thriving online community, and this is where they can sound off about issues facing the gaming industry today.

THE QUESTION: Motion-sensing gameplay: in fact or the future?

It's not until they light up the palms. A lot of the games... the very poor controls and... Twilight Princess is an example of how good they can be, while Red Steel is how bad they can be.

—mcsberg1795



Red Steel

It's a fast with potential. If it can be used in many fun ways in games, like with Twilight Princess, it can be something truly remarkable. However, now it seems like the majority of games use it like a gimmick and don't go very far beyond shaking and pointing.

—dockless

It's a fast with potential. If it can be used in many fun ways in games, like with Twilight Princess, it can be something truly remarkable. However, now it seems like the majority of games use it like a gimmick and don't go very far beyond shaking and pointing.

—WaketheMajors

It's the next evolution in video games. No matter how many poorly controlled games come out, there will always be that one game that makes you think, "Wow, this is how video games should be played."

—God_of_Destruction

For now it just seems like a fad. It's there, and offers a new way to play games, but I'll be happy to live as I have my good of control when the alternative starts to get gimmicky.

—boogievin23

It's definitely the future. Where else are video games to go but on the route of incorporating players into the experience at a deeper level? Remember the PlayStation 2 commercials that showed PlayStation 2's engaging technology? It has to begin somewhere.

—eriksbard



Do you want to make your voice heard? Write in with your opinion at www.gameinformer.com/forums.

TO BE A ROCK AND NOT TO ROLL

While I agree with some of the songs you chose for the top ten songs to be in Guitar Hero III, I do feel you missed a song that should have at least made an honorable mention: "Hotel California." It starts with a lengthy guitar riff, and finishes with a faster riff at the end of the song. I highly doubt I'm the only one who wants to rock to The Eagles' classic hit.

Stevie Manning
Via sbcglobal.net



for Matchbox 20 and Korn songs). Oh, and to clear up Andrew's point: Lynrd Skynyrd didn't make the list because "Freebird" was basically the last boss of Guitar Hero II. As to the "No Stairway" rule...well, we think the phrasing there is open to interpretation. You know, sometimes words have two meanings.

THE GREAT PURGE

There was a time when Game Informer devoted

the bulk of its pages to actual reviews. Yet over the past few years, I've seen more and more fluff stories and lavish previews creep in. I just received my March issue, and at first I couldn't even find the review section since it was only 11 pages. If you guys are that pressed for space, here's what you can do: cut the industry articles (no one cares), big previews, classic game reviews, Dear GI, the trivia section, and the walkthroughs and cheats. Will people miss those sections? Sure, but you can only publish a finite number of pages — and you're devoting too few to the reviews.

Erin Jeffreys
Via gmail.com

No Stairway!

Anonymous
Via aol.com

■ Here's a little tip if you ever decide to publish your own gaming magazine: There's nothing quite like a top ten list to get people fired up. The gaming community's pervasive love of Guitar Hero led to a massive response to our Guitar Hero III wish list. We just want to say thanks to all of you who sent us complaints, videos, and personal picks (though you would be saddened to see the number of suggestions

■ Hey, yeah! We've been so stupid all this time, assuming that our readers care about the coolest upcoming titles, the biggest industry happenings, and gaming as a hobby in general. Everyone just wants cold, hard review scores, minus any bothersome context or perspective. Never mind the fact that some months only have a handful of games hitting retail shelves. For those months, we'll just pad the remaining pages with pictures of kittens interacting with everyday objects in humorous ways. Here's the only problem

with this strategy: If we cut the Dear GI section, where would people write to complain about our Sonic and Dragon Ball Z scores?

PROBLEMS UNLOCKED

I want to talk to you about Reiner's opinion piece in issue 167. I think Achievements are a great way to show off to your friends how good you are at games. However, what about cheaters? A friend and I have been known to "cheat" at some Achievements. For example, to get the 10 kills Achievement in Rainbow Six Vegas, we just set up a player match and I let my friend kill me 10 times, and then he let me kill him 10 times. Don't get me wrong, my Gamerscore is over 13,000 and I get most of them honestly (you can't fake beating Call of Duty 2 and 3 on Veteran), but there are plenty of ways you can top your Gamerscore with little effort.

Andrie Taz
Via hotmail.com

In issue 167 there was an article called "The X-Factor" that praised the Xbox 360's achievement point system. I agree with this in some ways; it helps prolong single-player games. Achievements can add hours to games in the RPG or Adventure genres. That's not the problem for me. My grievances are with Achievements based in the multiplayer modes of games. For example, in Gears of War there are many points to be gained from defeating opponents online with different weapons and in different ways. Multiplayer games are about cooperation and teamwork, and having these sorts of objectives can break teams apart. I don't know how many times I've been told not to pick up a certain weapon because a player was working on an Achievement, or being accused of stealing a kill when it was better for the team if I finish an enemy off. The bottom line is this: There should be no Achievements in online multiplayer — they discourage teamwork and make the multiplayer experience nothing more than a number game.

Thomas Hult
Newport Center, VA

JUDGING A BOOK

I have a problem and I hope you friendly Game Informers have an answer for me. I was recently browsing your magazine for the latest and greatest video games, and I noticed that all of your cover stories are titles from some big kahuna. LucasArts, Rockstar, EA, and Ubisoft — they seem to get a lot of attention. Why not choose a promising underdog, like BioWare?

Alex MacDonald
Allendale, Michigan

■ A proven never-miss developer like BioWare should hardly be considered an underdog (the developer's Jade Empire appeared on the cover of issue 126), but you bring up a good point. The truth is that we make an effort to spotlight games that may be under most gamers' radars, like BioShock, Dark Sector, or Kane & Lynch. In the grand scheme of things, our covers on high-profile games (like this month's GTA story) may be more memorable, but we still love to throw our support behind lesser-known games that we think will be awesome.



Stop Poking Me!

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Orc Hero Required

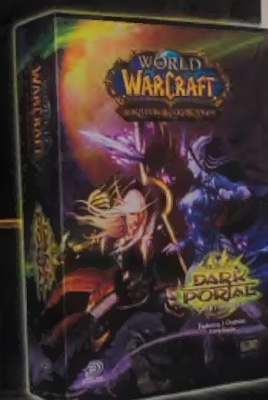
Lazy Peons enters play exhausted.

Exhaust Lazy Peons to complete this quest.

Reward: Draw a card.

"Stop poking me!"

DARK PORTAL 303/319 Art by: Steve Ellis



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■ We'll admit that Microsoft's Achievement system isn't perfect, but it is impossible to deny that it is influencing the way we play games. With the PlayStation 3's Home tapping into similar concepts (see our story on page 16), it seems as though they will become a staple of the industry moving forward. Quantifiable rewards, whether they be trophies or a Gamerscore, give gamers additional incentive to fully explore multiple angles of their games. There are still some kinks to iron out, like the ability to cheat and the weight of online components. If the success of Achievements so far is any indication, it is safe to assume that they'll be around for a while, leaving plenty of time for improvement.

In March I read your article about the Columbine game, and it showed me that we – as gamers – are being singled out as second-rate citizens. We seem to have one less right than everyone else: the right of free speech. Although I believe the game was in poor taste, Super Columbine Massacre RPG was meant to provoke discussion about disturbing issues that are still prevalent in our nation. I found it disappointing how easily the game was pulled and how little resistance was offered. It is incredibly frustrating that some people have made it their mission to regulate what games others can make or play based on some misguided notion of moral superiority.

Thomas Ward
Wharton, New Jersey

I am writing in reference to the Super Columbine Massacre RPG article. I feel that, in not truly examining the position against the game, you support the idea that anything is permissible under the label of "art." What comes from that notion are products of this ilk – games that play around with serious issues, trying to shield themselves from criticism under the banner of artistic expression. This specific example of "artistic expression" is no more than somebody getting jollies out of stirring up a ruckus. If this game is trying to promulgate the idea that getting picked on in school justifies mass murder, I feel you owe it to readers to present this point.

Alex Gajkov
Redford, MI

▲ The tragic events of Columbine still resonate with many people, which is part of the reason behind the polarized reactions to Danny Ledonne's *Super Columbine Massacre RPG!*. While we can't say whether the decision to pull the game from the Slamdance Guerilla Gamemaker Contest was right or wrong, it seems like there are some misconceptions that should be cleared up. *SCMRPG* was not created as a commercial title. It was never intended to hit retail shelves. Think of it like an experimental film, intended for a specific audience; the mere fact that the game exists in some form doesn't mean that 8-year-olds will be buying the DS version tomorrow. It should also be noted that *SCMRPG* attempts to examine the actions of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, not glorify or justify them. On the other hand, even though the *SCMRPG* is intended to be a social commentary, what is permissible under that definition will differ from person to person. For many, regardless of intention, the content in any context simply crosses the line.

MAY WINNER!

YIHYOUNG LI
It looks like someone
learned all of their brush
techniques!

Enter the Game Informer Reader Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best dam art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault. All entries become the property of Game Informer and can't be returned.

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**TACH
SCHEFFLER**
No scandal here!
Miis don't have
any "below the
belt" customiza-
tion options



MARIKO W. GREEN
Whoa! Someone actually liked Godhand enough to draw it! What's next, Bomberman Act Zero art?

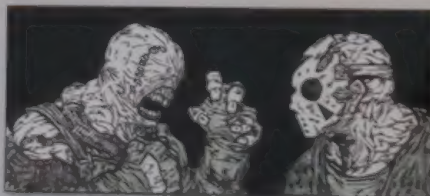
CORRECTIONS

In our last issue (April 2007, GI #168), we neglected to give proper credit to the artists responsible for our Game Interceptor cover, Big Time Attic. You can see their other work online at www.bigtimeattic.com. We apologize for the oversight.



JASON JENKINS

In addition to their ruthless brutality, barbarians are also known for telling hilarious "your mom" jokes.



DESMOND NELSON

We are purchasing front row tickets to this fight right now



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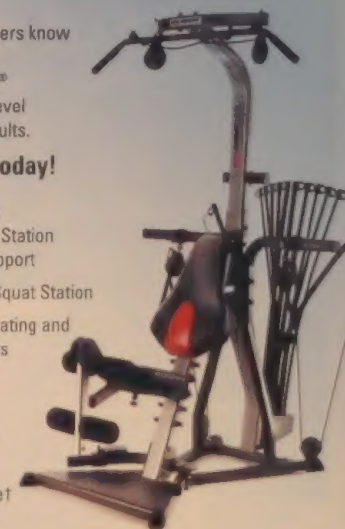
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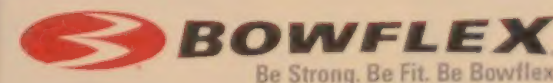
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Breaking News, Views, And Technology From
The Cutting Edge Of Gaming

news

SONY COMES HOME

PS3 SOCIAL SERVICE THIS FALL



Favorite trophies can be displayed in a personal Hall of Fame. Others will be stashed in a below ground storage unit

During this year's Game Developers Conference, Sony rallied around its latest vision for the future of gaming. In a keynote address delivered by president of worldwide studios Phil Harrison, the company claimed that video games went through two previous iterations, essentially offline and online. Sony is now trying to take things to the next step with what it is calling Game 3.0, or "The connected device with dynamic content and active connected communities [and] open standards."

The centerpiece of this new philosophy will be a free 3D social networking space called Home. The system will be accessed via a new icon in the cross media bar that connects directly to the Web. Users will first appear in the Central Lounge with a generic character that they can fully customize. In addition to various body and face sliders, players will be able to select from a variety of default clothes, purchased outfits, or duds that come included on game discs (SingsStar and Heavenly Sword shirts were shown as examples).

Players can communicate via text and voice, as well

as with selectable phrases and gestures. In the Games Space they'll be able to play a round of pool, bowling, or an arcade game without any separate menu system. To escape the hubbub, users will customize their own private apartments, which they can invite friends over to. These spaces can be decorated with a variety of couches, tables, decorations, wallpapers, etc. Again, these items will be a mix of free, paid, and packed in with games. Blank picture frames can be placed on the wall and filled with photos stored on the PS3 hard drive. Users will also be able to play video files on TVs placed in the space. Sony even plans to allow pet creation and customization in future iterations of Home.

The theater space is basically a digital representation of your local AMC. Users can meet up to watch new trailers and videos, and we can see events and premieres kicking off here as Home picks up steam. Perhaps the biggest potential lies in custom spaces created by gaming companies or brands like Coke, Gap, and NBC. These locations are fully malleable to replicate the inside of a business, show off a new gameplay feature, or pull off whatever companies

want to do to bring visitors in.

In response to Microsoft's Achievements, Sony has created a trophy system. Every Home user will have their own personal Hall of Fame that they can stock with around a dozen of their crowning accomplishments. Remaining trophies can still be stored and scrolled through in a kind of floating database. Right next to the main Hall of Fame area is massive auditorium that looks a lot like the impenetrable senate room from the Star Wars prequels. Here every PS3 game available will be displayed so that players can check out the possible trophies they can earn.

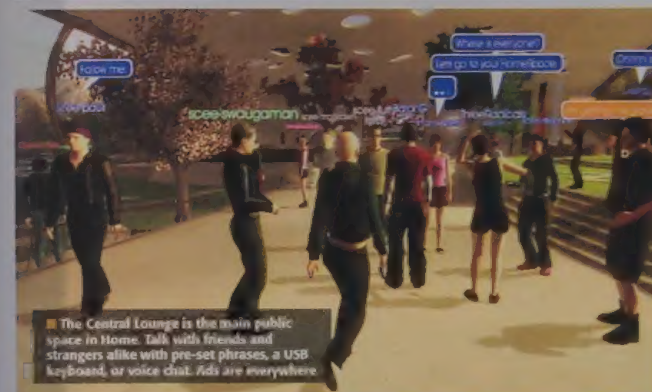
Even though the program is totally free, users will have to deal with a barrage of dynamic advertising in posters, banners, and video screens located around the spaces. At there's the additional cost of microtransactions for in-Home items. But it seems like users can invest as little or as many real dollars as they please and still enjoy a large majority of the features. Sony plans a large-scale beta of Home this April, followed by the official release in the fall.



Private apartments can be tricked out with physics-enabled objects, themed wallpaper, and framed digital photos from the PS3 hard drive



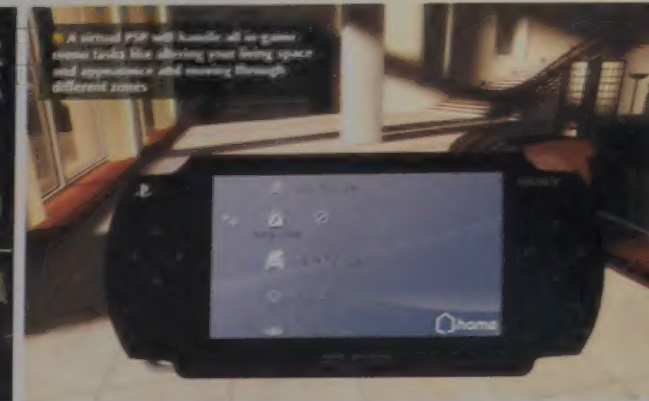
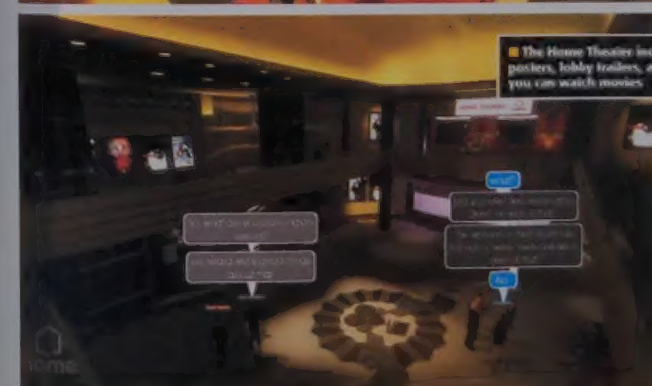
Game and non-game companies can create custom spaces for users to hang out in. This example area features an interactive driving range, basketball shoot-out, soccer booth, and boxing ring



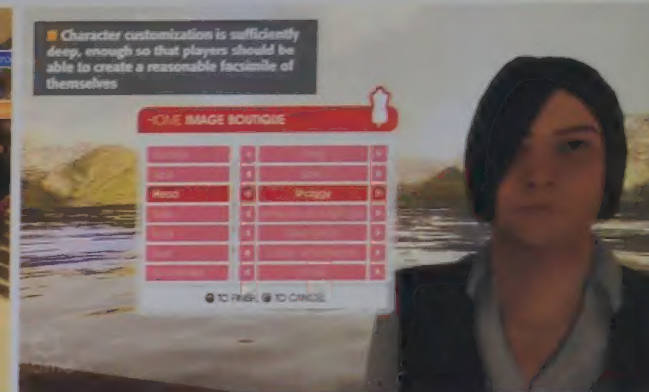
The Games Space allows users to play pickup games like pool and bowling. Downloadable games can be played in stand-up arcade cabinets



The Home Theater includes constantly updating trailers, lobby trailers, and physical spaces where you can watch movies



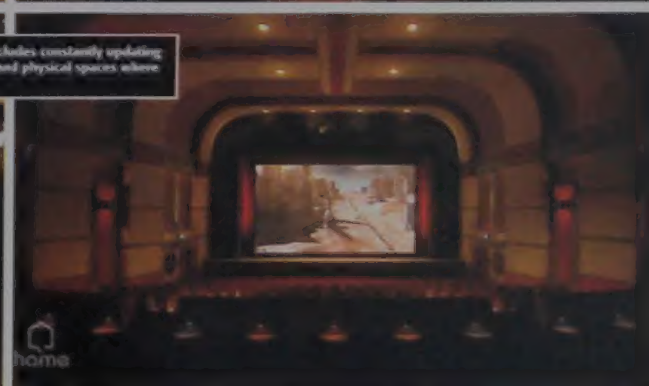
A virtual PS3 will handle all in-game menu tasks like allowing your living space and appearance and moving through different zones



Character customization is sufficiently deep, enough so that players should be able to create a reasonable facsimile of themselves



Eventually players will be able to upgrade to more luxurious digs, complete with lake-side patios



DATA FILE

More Harry You Can Use

VIVA PINATA FULL OF MORE TREATS



CRASH BANDICOOT: NO ONE EVER

THE LAST OF US



SPYGLASS: BACK AGAIN



ON THE BORDER: COMING



WITNESS: BOARD

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPRING HASN'T SPRUNG FOR SOME GAMES

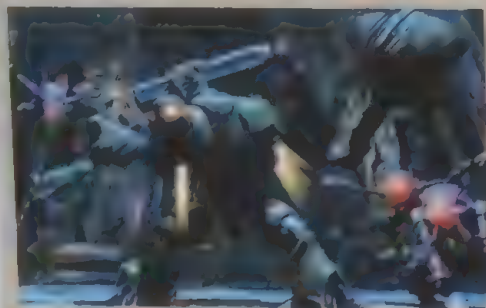
With the recent announcements that BioShock is being pushed back into late August and developer The Collective is being taken off Warner Bros. Interactive's Dirty Harry game, we thought we'd update you really quick on some titles that should have been out now or may have just fallen off your radar.



Battlefield: Bad Company



Medal of Honor Airborne



Too Human



Enemy Territories: Quake Wars

The Legend of Zelda: The Phantom Hourglass



Gran Turismo 4 Mobile

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ACTIVISION

RP

XBOX

Jump In

"I want barrels of it." It's a late Wednesday afternoon at Greenberg Studios in downtown San Francisco, and 19-year-old gamer Raul* has just unequivocally described his attitude towards blood in a first-person shooter. Sitting before a moderator and among a group of his video gaming peers, Raul hasn't been the most vocal member of this post-release focus group for Ubisoft's Wii title *Red Steel*, but he is articulate in his opinions. This is exactly what the people behind the proverbial one-way glass wanted. In the end, it's just one comment of many that the research team will field about the game from forums, reviews, and sessions like this one. In that regard, this focus group is very similar to many others that occur for different companies throughout the industry. It's neither the beginning nor the end of the game development process, but simply one part along the way.

BEHIND THE GLASS: GI LOOKS IN ON FOCUS GROUPS



65



THE

THE



The use of the word 'the' is a common mistake in writing. It is often used incorrectly to refer to a specific person or thing, when it should be used to refer to a group or a general concept.

66
A. J. ZING

however, at the early stage in the platform file, Rudman points out that the focus group is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving. He says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving.

When the game is not a "one-on-one" session, Rudman says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving. He says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving.

A possible danger in focus groups, particularly with strong characters like Mark, is groupthink. During the course of the session, Rudman had the date, write down the one word in the room that is the most important. This helped to clarify the group's opinion. Rudman says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving.

Mark, who is a "one-on-one" session, Rudman says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving. He says that the game is not a "one-on-one" session. It's a group of people who are looking for a need or a problem that the game is not currently solving.

are pulled in the ensuing answers, but what's more interesting is when the gamers express something deeper about their time with the game. Angela liked the seemingly mundane task of shooting barrels because "it's the one thing I have control over that they are not making me do." On the other hand, almost everyone in the panel wished there was more blood — not just for gore, but because they felt it was a touch of realism that the genre demanded. Someone even points out how there's dripping blood on the game's cover.

Although the group discusses the game's controls, this aspect of a title is usually handled differently in pre-release focus groups. Sean Denny says LucasArts videotapes these one-on-one sessions in order to provide an extra dimension of feedback. "We watch their hands on the controller, and we can see their facial expressions, and we actually have them verbalize and talk out loud, which is a little weird at first. It's that sort of ongoing dialogue we ask people for so we can understand their thought

Discussion Guide

I. Ground Rules

- ✓ Welcome/Ground Rules
- ✓ Welcome and introduction
- ✓ Explanation of confidentiality of viewing facility and videotaping
- ✓ Explanation that even friends disagree with one another — looking for debate and different opinions
- ✓ No wrong answers, looking for honest opinions
- ✓ Looking for brutal honesty about what shown from "experts"
- ✓ Moderator has nothing to do with what expressed so won't hurt feelings

II Introduction & Warm Up (10 Min)

- Introductions
- ✓ Name, age, grade/job
- What are some of your favorite video games?
- What are some of your favorite shooter games? Why?
- What are the qualities that a shooter must have? Explain
- What are some of your favorite action games? Why?
- What are the qualities that an action game must have? Explain
- How would you differentiate a shooter game from an action game?

(Moderator will write down key elements on shooter/action games in order to use them for part IV)

This eight-page document was the backbone of the focus group session, although it was not slavishly followed. At times moderator Gary Rudman strayed from the document as he saw fit.



Focus groups testing out gameplay concepts are usually one-on-one sessions video-taped for additional feedback.

process of, 'You know, I want to use the Force, but the control scheme is such that I don't know how to use the Force.' We need that level of detail so the team can go back and balance to make it as accessible as possible."

At various times in the Red Steel focus group, the knives come out, and the feedback gets negative. Ugly, even. But finding a bunch of gamers to say something bad about a game is a lot more valuable in the product development process. "We would have made the game better, but we would have been able to take the feedback at all times, but just when the game gets into 'Vitality' and 'Action' mode, you know, 'Action' mode, which are right at the heart of the game," says Denny. "It's like you're the freakin' Highlander or something." A better story, more environmental interactivity, improved controls, and of course, more blood are all targeted as necessary improvements.

As the session ends, we're particularly interested to find out what the researchers thought about some of the more negative comments in the session. They were totally unfazed. In fact, during the focus group the team behind the mirror would often laugh out loud at a comment. Rudman is used to this. "Once you go down a negative path, it's pretty hard to go back because people are paid to come in here and be critical. We always say, 'When you come out of a focus group session, and you feel like your product doesn't suck, you've done very well, because [this age group] is very critical.'"

In many ways, this has been a typical focus group in that it's just data that can be interpreted and used in a variety of ways. There

are even contradictory statements those in the group have made which have to be reconciled. "You don't want polling," says Shovar. "You never want to be counting people in a focus group. Well, three of the guys didn't like it and three did." You are only seeing one group. In order to analyze this, and I hesitate to even use that word because you don't do that in qualitative [study], you wait until

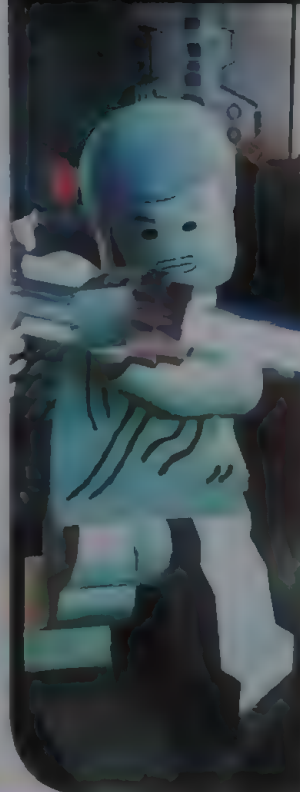
you've finished everything and see what the patterns are. It's not the thing, that's the thing, it's the thing that we can do. It's not quite like if you just happened to see a video of a Spider-Man game that was being played in the printer that community. It's not quite like if you just happened to see a video of a Spider-Man game that was being played in the printer that community. It's not quite like if you just happened to see a video of a Spider-Man game that was being played in the printer that community.

As we prepare to leave the facility, the Ubisoft team is getting ready for the next session. A buffet of Thai food has been set up and people help themselves as Rudman enters

the room and begins to discuss changes to the question sheet the team has prepared in advance to tweak how this next panel is approached. There is talk about adding new questions to see how the focus group's recommendations for improvements would differ if Red Steel were approached as an action game and not a shooter, but some think this is unnecessary. We reach the lobby and see a dozen or so kids waiting to be vetted by Rudman for the next session, talking about video games as is natural. It's just another Wednesday night. ■■■

THE CUSTOMER IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

Sean Denny, executive director of consumer insights, gave us an example of how you can't take someone's word in a focus group at face value. While doing some research for LEGO Star Wars II, the team fielded some feedback from some consumers who described what it would take for them to buy the game. However, the developers dismissed the advice. "It was valid, true analysis," says Denny. "So here it was: wanted to make a game for 10-year-olds, that is what we'd do. But that is why we make [Star Wars] Kinect, and they can play that game. So we decided to not use that data from consumers because it would go against the principle of the franchise."



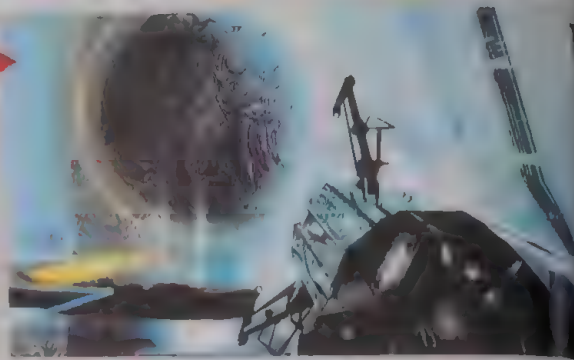
More meaningful environmental interactivity is one thing that all the members of our focus group asked for.

the top 10 videogame weapons

If playing video games has taught us anything, it's that in the year 20XX robots from the future will most likely try to enslave mankind. To be prepared for this event, the *Cr* office has been collecting and blueprinting the ultimate video game arsenal. These are the top 10 weapons we want at our sides when the decisive hour is at hand. *Viva La Resistance!*

1 Zero-Point Energy Field Manipulator (Half-Life 2)

The thing that made the Gravity Gun so awesome was Valve's incredible physics. You could spend hours just playing with Dog and this gun, and for a game where the premise is about you shooting dudes, that says a lot about a gun. Then Valve made it even better: By the end of *Half-life 2* the Gravity Gun is so super-powered that everything is a weapon, and this is the only gun you need.



2

...



3

...



4 Lightsaber (Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast)

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5

...



6

...



7 Cerebral Bore (Turok 2: Seeds of Evil)

...



8

...



9

...



10 Laptop Gun (Gears of War)

...



LARA CROFT
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Life After Warcraft

What's Your Next MMO?

Maybe your guild is banging on the doors of Illidan's Black Temple but you're growing tired of the raiding treadmill. Perhaps end-game dungeons require more effort to clear than you're willing to put in, or the latest round of clearly unnecessary nerfs to your class crossed the line. Maybe you're just sick of World of Warcraft in general. So what's next?

Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS • DEVELOPER BLIZZARD • RELEASE SUMMER 2006

The strategy in Warhammer Online is on a grand scale. You'll fight over objectives in the vast world, compete in instanced battles with balanced teams, and even mount large-scale invasions of enemy territory with the eventual goal of conquering your four rival cities. The way that public zones are structured, with the PvP objectives located away from the more PvE-oriented content, should encourage more the grinding under combat. It's a little bit like talking about strategy in a game that's mostly PvE.

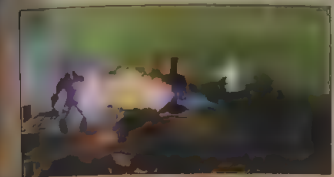


Compete

Action

TABULA RASA

Lord British's new project for Korean publisher NCsoft is truly unique. An action-oriented combat model that lets players physically dodge incoming projectiles and a heavily instancing-based design make Tabula Rasa a great one to watch if you're interested in something new and different.



HUXLEY

Available in July for PC as well as September on 360, Huxley is attempting to combine the pervasive world of an MMO with the team-based shooting action of Counter Strike. We'll know whether Korean developer/publisher Webzen pulls it off any better than Planetside soon enough.



FURY

New publisher Gamecock is taking MMOs in a new direction for a much-style arena combat. Fury gives players a classless progression system to customize their characters as they see fit and aims to lock the points off of WoW's arena and battleground systems by making PvP the focus of the game.



DOGS & HEROES: ROME RISING

Classical Roman mythology is the perfect setting for this action-based MMO from Perpetual Entertainment and SOE. Recruiting and training a squad of soldiers to fight with you against creatures strange and magical is a major selling point here, and promises to make soloing very viable play style despite the online nature of the game.



Build



Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures

PUBLISHER EIDOS INTERACTIVE/FUNCOM • DEVELOPER FUNCOM • RELEASE SUMMER 2006, TBA (360)

Out on the frontier you can build up towns that have the most skilled blacksmiths, the richest merchants, and the strongest warriors—all of whom owe allegiance to the heroes that made it all possible (that's you). NPC enemies will build up their own towns and send out raiding parties, so you have to protect them as well. If you're wondering why you would care about any of this, Age of Conan also features siege and formation warfare: large-scale conflicts where the wealth and power to get others to fight for you can be worth more than individual skill in battle. Furthermore, you can build towns in the Border Kingdoms that are centers for PvP action, and give evil guild-wide buffs to those who can conquer and hold the most territory.

Explore



The Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar

PUBLISHER MIDWAY • DEVELOPER TURBINE • RELEASE APRIL 2006

We've all gotten a giggle out of passing over a zone line in WoW and dinging a level off of the exploration XP. What if you got a title and access to a brand new talent for doing that as well? The Lord of the Rings Online has a feature that rewards players for accomplishing "deeds" that does just that. Of course, you'll unlock these achievements via a variety of derring-do, be it the aforementioned exploration, committing genocidal atrocities against the monsters in a certain region, or completing a difficult instanced dungeon. This is the most direct assault on WoW's core gameplay that we've seen. We'll find out very soon whether Turbine can keep Blizzard on its toes when LOTRO releases at the end of April.

There's also a handful of announced MMO titles that haven't yet been announced, but we'll keep an eye on them.

WARHAMMER 40,000

Blizzard is publishing this next project from City of Heroes developer Cryptic Studios. Prepare for the most advanced of character customization and a massive, multi-layered story.

MARVEL UNIVERSE ONLINE

Blizzard is publishing this next project from City of Heroes developer Cryptic Studios. Prepare for the most advanced of character customization and a massive, multi-layered story.

DC COMICS MMO

Blizzard is publishing this next project from City of Heroes developer Cryptic Studios. Prepare for the most advanced of character customization and a massive, multi-layered story.

STAR WARS GALACTIC

Blizzard is publishing this next project from City of Heroes developer Cryptic Studios. Prepare for the most advanced of character customization and a massive, multi-layered story.

Incognito



ARROYO IN INFLUENCE: 10M

CAREER MOMENTS

15 Years: Nintendo

Rebel Alliance

Getting in Gear

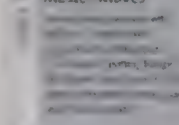
Using the Force



Master Moves



Master Moves



Brothers in Arms



Back in the Future

RANDY PITCHFORD

Texas-based Gearbox Software has worked with some of the biggest franchises in the business. After the success of *Brothers in Arms*, the company is working on a game based on Ridley Scott's *Aliens*. We recently spoke with CEO Randy Pitchford about the company's present and future.

Talk about the next generation *Brothers* in Arms.

Could you talk about it in broader terms?

And we've seen the other ones once.

Aliens has a great ambience for a shooter and has a great mythology, but it also seems to lend itself to a very tight, old-school corridor-based experience. Recently, shooters have really been opening things up beyond that design template. How do you deal with that?

How do you balance these big projects being an independent developer?

You're using Unreal Engine 3 for *Brothers in Arms* and *Aliens*. You've worked with a lot of engines before, how do you rate Unreal 3? We're probably the only developer on the planet

I've worked on a few science fiction shooters...we're all just stealing from Aliens.

Anything more you'd like to let us know about?

So you'll be branching off into some odd source code material?

The other big project you have going on is the *Aliens* game. What's your vision for the present?



**READY
TO MAKE
HISTORY**

**BROTHERS
IN ARMS**

Gearbox Software is a Texas-based independent game developer. Brothers in Arms is a trademark of Gearbox Software.

GI REFEREES THE BATTLE OF THE BIG RIGS

Alienware's gaming rig can be configured for nearly a third the price of the Omen, but for each dollar you shave you're cutting out performance. Ours cost \$4,999 and scored a little lower than the Omen on the 3DMark05 and PCMark05 benchmarks (11700 and 9940 respectively). Like the Voodoo, the Area-51's video cards are DirectX 10 compliant, so you can play upcoming games like Crysis in all their glory. Though it scored lower, the Alienware wins out due to its superior design. Unlike the loud Voodoo, this liquid-cooled monster kept quiet under its Alien-themed canopy.

Starting at \$3,999.99 • www.alienware.com

The Omen is built for speed and power. Its Quad Core processors reportedly provide 70 percent more processing power than Intel's dual core processors. This pricey beast can be configured with ATI Crossfire or nVidia SLI graphics cards. Our Omen unit (with SLI) tested well in 3DMark05 and PCMark05, scoring 18174 in the former and 9963 in the latter. This monster's impressive performance is tempered by its obnoxiously loud liquid intercooler, which sounds like a gurgling Coca-Cola plant. The perforated case, while a spectacular view in the dark, doesn't help dampen the sound either. Does the future have to sound like a swamp cooler?

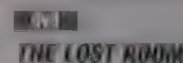
Starting at \$3,999.99 • www.omen.com

... ..

[illegible]

Tired of having to go outside and breathe fresh air when you golf? The Golf Launchpad uses a multitude of sensors that measure the speed, path, and angle of your swing and transfer your movements into the game. We found that this process wasn't always spot on, but it was better than we expected. Clubs and compatible games such as Tiger Woods PGA Tour and Hot Shots Golf Fore! sold separately.

\$249.99 (PC/MAC) \$199.99 (XBOX) • www.golflaunchpad.com

[illegible]

There's a nod to the movie. There are the same old
 brother-his that have been out for awhile, but now
 they come packed with 10 final fantasy pack arts, the
 100-page anime art and a 100-page art that may
 end the way to fantasy. It's a good confirmation about
 anime that did not happen in the anime.

\$90.00 - www.cnnpictures.com



\$9.99 (starter decks) \$3.49 (buster packs)
www.sabertoothgames.com





T

Cost is the number one issue of AMORPC development. This is where we are going to see the AMORPC market begin to bifurcate along two lines.

MY PREVIOUS
SECURITY SOFTWARE
KEPT HITTING ME
WITH POP-UPS.
SO I GAVE IT A
SMACKDOWN.

40 MILLION USERS HAVE ALREADY
DISCOVERED THAT SECURITY SOFTWARE
DOESN'T HAVE TO BUG YOU WITH
CONSTANT UPGRADE MESSAGES
TO KEEP YOU PROTECTED.

THEY'VE MADE THE MOVE TO AVG
INTERNET SECURITY—SMARTER,
MORE POWERFUL. FRUSTRATION-FREE
PROTECTION AGAINST VIRUSES,
SPYWARE, SPAM AND OTHER THREATS.

JOIN THE REVOLUTION.



AVG

INTERNET SECURITY

grand theft auto IV

LET THE
NEXT GENERATION

BEGIN

"Life is complicated. I killed people. Smuggled people. Sold people. Perhaps here, things will be different." These words, tellingly and optimistically spoken by Grand Theft Auto IV's protagonist, Niko Belic, don't just speak of a tarnished soul that sees opportunity in a new city. They point directly toward the future of this series.

The video game industry has been a hotbed of innovation for years, and Grand Theft Auto IV is no exception. The game's story is a dark and gritty tale of a man seeking redemption in a new city. The game's graphics are stunning, and the gameplay is addictive. Grand Theft Auto IV is a must-play for anyone who loves action games.

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**THE HUSTLE & BUSTLE
OF A THRIVING METROPOLIS**

[illegible]

MAKING part of the game is
delivering story in new ways
and allowing the player to shape
their own destiny.



Liberty City because he's from his cousin Roman. Amazing life, it's the whole picture of what the fifteen sports cars.



10 General Work: Auto W is a shiny, clean, through-the-type of black and white, with a strong Singapore immigrant color. You come to Liberty City to find the American Dream.

A big part of New York life is walking around the streets and meeting lunatics. That's something that we definitely tried to put into the game.

— **Dan Houser**
vice president of creative



40user elaborates. "And [Bellie] believes it." His bid
41to free his past for what he thought would be the
42sewer pastures of America couldn't be further
43from the truth. He was a man who had been
44born in the South, and he had been
45in the South for the rest of his life. He had
46been in the South for the rest of his life.
47While he may make you contemplate strangling
48the man who killed your mother, he
49may also make you know the difference
50between man and machine, and
51the start of the game. And if
52you won't get a chance to see Bellie in
53the end, you will see his life unfold from
54the day he steps into Liberty City And given

Roman's situation, you have your work cut out for you.

"Roman is heavily in debt. Lots of criminals are trying to get rid of him," comments Houser.

He is a high energy optimist that will try to make things happen. It seems like a good person, but they are completely lacking in a go of it in a new world, and then we discover, Houser thinks that maybe Nako has been avoiding other problems at home."

The Manhattan Bridge is a suspension bridge that carries the New York City Subway and Interstate 76 over the East River, connecting Manhattan and the Bronx. The bridge is a landmark of New York City and is one of the busiest bridges in the world.

[illegible]

Belle's snatching the star and it would appear that she's the most sincere and honest lad amongst them. The whole crowd at a brown-toned campfire to the two people: friends, possibly neighbours — having a conversation on the stoop next door, Belle pushes the door open — again a motion fueled by the sense of weight and a realistic accompanying animation. It becomes obvious that this isn't Belle's house, as he quickly clings to a wall and pulls out a pistol. One quick look around the corner reveals that the living room, furnished in reds, browns and greens, is not occupied. Belle slowly slides into the room with his pistol drawn high.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

[illegible][illegible]

I live this
amazing life,
it's the American
Dream come true. I
have two women.
I have four hot
tubs. I have fifteen
sports cars, and
[Bellic] believes it.



A NEW LEVEL OF FREEDOM

"In all previous GTA games you might have felt like a slave," opines Houser. "You are ordered by people to do things. Now, there's still going to be an element of that because you are an underling that people tell what to do for large parts of the game, but you can also choose how you want to spend your time. I want to hang out with him and her. I want to go and see this guy because he always has fun things to do. Call him up and maybe you can hang with him. Maybe he'll answer. That's a fun way of navigating the story and navigating the world and your time in it. You have a lot of choice over what you want to do."

Storytelling is a huge focus in this next installment, and it will be reflected through the various ways you can interact with the city and its denizens. According to Houser, *Rockstar North* is giving people more freedom, more choice, and more sense of control over their destiny. The game still follows a narrative path, but it's quite different in its structure. "The story is told in a number of different ways," adds Houser. "But we've tried to replicate as many ways possible that you engage with people. That's talking [in person], cell phones, and a bunch of other ways of giving the player front story, or to explain character motivation."

between — leaving a world of imagination as to where his actions will bring him — especially with Rockstar hinting heavily at the idea of players plotting their own destiny. When asked about this, Houser points out that “you are just one fish in a big pond of other fish. New York motivation isn’t just about turning up here and becoming the king. That’s an impossible goal.”

Over the last console generation, Grand Theft Auto has become a series of period pieces. Vice City was set in the ‘80s, and San Andreas took place in the ‘90s. Just since GTA III a game also featuring Liberty City, has Rockstar North approached a contemporary setting. In Grand Theft Auto IV, we are stepping into Liberty City as seen in 2007. It’s a bigger city and a different age. These are both things that could have a huge effect on the way that you approach your criminal activities.

“During conversations we had with a lot of crime experts and a lot of cops, we learned that it’s very hard to be a criminal nowadays,” Houser says with a smile. “The glory days of that stuff are over. That was something that we definitely tried to capture in the story and the experience of the game. People are constantly getting arrested. The police are a heavy presence.”

MORE THAN YOU WOULD EXPECT

In terms of scale, this GTA experience shouldn’t be much different than San Andreas. The only noticeable difference is that players won’t be able to pilot airplanes. “There are no planes, because it’s just reality,” adds Houser. “Apart from the fact that [the vehicles] are similar. We want it to feel realistic and gritty. [Liberty City] is not going to be riding a unicycle or rollerblading. We are giving choice and variety that is not going to fit that character. We’re not suddenly saying there are no motorcycles. We are keeping all of that stuff. It’s the same range and diversity that we had, but to fit the character.”

Working on elements of the game that bring out the realism of the character, Houser admits that Rockstar North is approaching the recruitment of voice actors in a different way. Reading between the lines, the Liberty City cast has familiar voices, and more voices that fit the desired attitude of the characters. Bellic’s deep Eastern European accent fits his gritty exterior, and the chatter heard in the streets just screams New York.

It’s the thought process is being applied to the soundtrack and radio stations. “We’ve raided the past heavily,” Houser admits. “We are going to get some great music that works with the 2007 Liberty City. We’ve set the benchmark for game soundtracks in the past, and I don’t think we’ve been surpassed in that. I think we’ve done some really

You are just one fish in a big pond of other fish. New York motivation isn’t just about turning up here and becoming the king. That’s an impossible goal.

amazing stuff. I think we are going to do something wicked this time. We’re pretty confident on that. It’s a great way of giving you, the player, part of the experience in a way that no other medium can. You can have songs that fit your mood. I want this music to be hardcore because I am in a hardcore mood. Going out for a date with a girl, so I need something more romantic. We pick tracks that fit the tempo of the game. It’s not a pedal-to-the-metal racing game. It’s an urban cruising gangster game. We pick music that we think works with that kind of experience. It’s got to be of a certain tempo or a certain feel no matter what genre it’s in. The debate that goes into every single track you would not believe. There are a large number of music fans that pick this stuff.”

With more realistic tones accompanying the visuals, it’s easy to think that this GTA experience will abandon the series’ trademark humor for more serious content. It will certainly feel like more of a realistic experience, but the humor will still be fully intact. Whether you are listening to advertisements on the radio, hear someone mumble something on the street, or read a billboard, Liberty City will still be a wild place. The same team, with the same sense of humor, is bringing this game to life.

This is something that even now, Houser finds amazing. “Some people talk about it like it’s a franchise. I think of it as a series of games made by the same people. Since GTA III, we still have exactly the same people. We’ve added some great people on top of that, but it’s the same two lead programmers, same physics guy, same producer, same executive producer, same writer, same audio guys, same designers. They are all in place. No one’s left.”

That’s what is so exciting. And what’s been such a great experience for everyone involved in working on these games is that we managed to develop it as a core group together. We haven’t lost any of the key talent. They’ve added great people in there. That kind of consistency has given everyone confidence in working with each other, and an understanding of what we are trying to do, and an

ambition that I don’t think is matched anywhere else. Where people come and people go, and the franchise lives on. The franchise is the people who make this game — it’s this core group of people. I think that’s something that sets us apart from a lot of places.”

It’s that and the fact that the team is trying things that no one has with video games. Grand Theft Auto brought new definition to the action genre, and showed us that not every decision that the player makes has to be linear and tied to a path. With Grand Theft Auto IV, the team is finding new ways to approach storytelling, movement, and the level of interaction the player has within the world. This tight-knit team continues to improve with each new product it touches. Some of the content is amusing, like being able to call a woman for a date. And some of its achievements simply blow your mind, such as its load times. After an initial loading sequence, the game will never load again — even when you transition between interior and exterior locations.

Rather than outsourcing the technology that Rockstar North utilizes, Rockstar as a whole has set up a studio of programmers in San Diego that does nothing but work on the company’s proprietary technologies. The engine of note is called RAGE (Rockstar Advanced Game Engine). You already got a brief taste of it with Table Tennis, and will get a much larger dose when Grand Theft Auto IV hits the streets on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 on October 16.

Both versions of the game will likely be identical, but Rockstar has confirmed that downloadable content will be exclusive to the Xbox 360 version. This content is said to be sizeable, and when asked about whether or not we would see this impressive new take on Liberty City living on past one game, Houser grins and says one thing: “episodic content.” Like all of the Grand Theft Autos that have come before this one, the experience is largely for the single player. The game will have multiplayer,

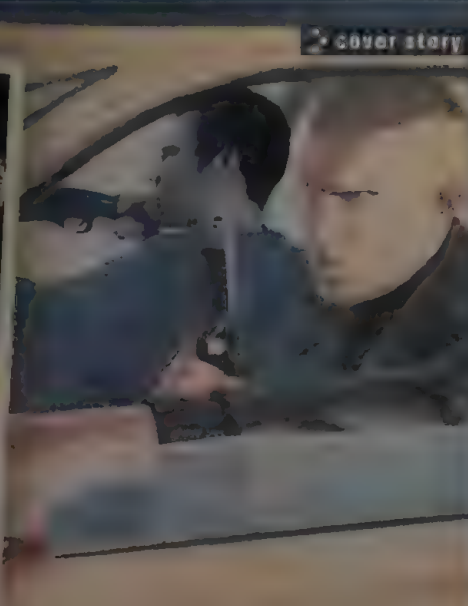
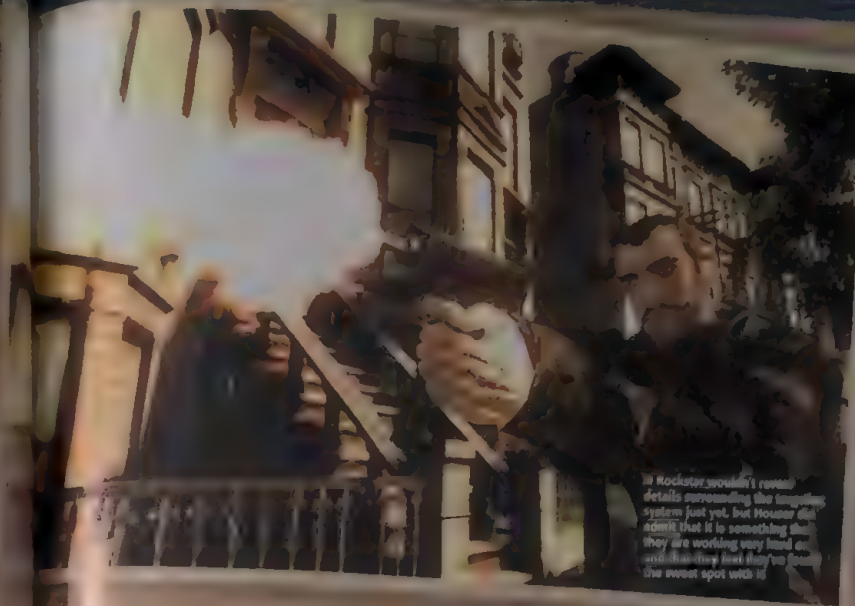
however. “Yes, there will be some,” Houser comments. “It’s not going to be a massively multiplayer online game, but we are trying to make something that is interesting, fun, and progressive, and goes nicely alongside the single-player game.”

It’s been in development for over three years, and Houser isn’t shy about admitting that this has been a lengthy experience already. “We knew to do something at this scale would take a very long time. Just to make graphics like that is very time consuming. The assets are big and heavy.”

Whether it changes the face of gaming again like it did in the previous generation remains to be seen, but Rockstar North knows exactly where this series needs to go next, and is running that extra mile to get it there and make it a new experience yet again.

Houser equates the leap that this installment is making to that which the series made between the first Grand Theft Auto and Grand Theft Auto III. This is a huge step to make — something that we really haven’t witnessed yet on the next-generation machines.

“Everyone always says, ‘Books tell you something, movies show you something, and games let you do something.’ [That is why games] were more interesting,” says Houser. “And that was why games were going to take over. Games let you be somewhere. That’s an amazing quality. That is something you just can’t get from any other medium. The chance to exist in this fantasy world, be it Liberty City, be it Mars, or wherever, I think is a really interesting side of what games are going to offer as an artistic medium and as an entertainment medium. What we tried to do this time was completely transform it so that the way the story unfolds, the way you deal with characters, the way the world behaves, the things that you can do, all of them give you this reason why you might want to be there and this sensation of living in this world.”



UNLIMITED ENABLED

> STYLE

> PUBLISHER

> DEVELOPER

> RELEASE



THE RETURN OF



ALL-PRO FOOTBALL

2K8

THE COMEBACK KID

They don't call the NFL the "No Fun League" for nothing. Whether it's touching the QB or showing off your personality in a touchdowns celebration, the league is likely against it. Nobody knows this better than gamers. By approaching Electronic Arts with an exclusive licensing deal, the NFL has shut down what once was a fun and beneficial rivalry between EA and NFL 2K3 developer Visual Concepts. "Get over it," says Jeff Thomas, VC's vice president of sports development, because there's no looking back.

That's not to say, however, that the NFL's decision didn't have a sizable effect on the company. "I don't know if that was about Friday, Thursday, or whatever day of the week it was," Jeff adds. "But it was definitely a huge impact for us." In fact, it was a while before Visual Concepts got over it themselves. The deal forced a spurt of forced introspection in late 2004. Jeff laughs as he remembers that period. "Holy crap, what are we going to do now?"

It was during this time that every person on the table and examined. A few obvious paths organizations called up the company and wanted it to make a football game based on their leagues. Another idea was to continue the NFL 2K3 develop-

ment line and go back to work with Microsoft's Xbox. The EA team has had several NFL 2K3 and several football games in the past, but the more that EA sees, the more they realize that EA's focus is on the future. Jeff Thomas says that EA's focus is on the future. Jeff Thomas says that EA's focus is on the future.

EA's focus is on the future. Jeff Thomas says that EA's focus is on the future. Jeff Thomas says that EA's focus is on the future. Jeff Thomas says that EA's focus is on the future.



PUTTING THE 'I' IN 'TEAM'

"I think it's a bit of a stretch to say we had a lot of input from the NFL," Jeff explains. "You know what? I think we tried to make it as realistic as possible. It took us this long to make something that was compelling." Of course, the most generation of consoles is... for any company, but instead... a football product to coincide... the launch of the Xbox 360 or even... the team decided to dig as... into their own systems as they could... to provide something that feels... to the way most generation games... would play."

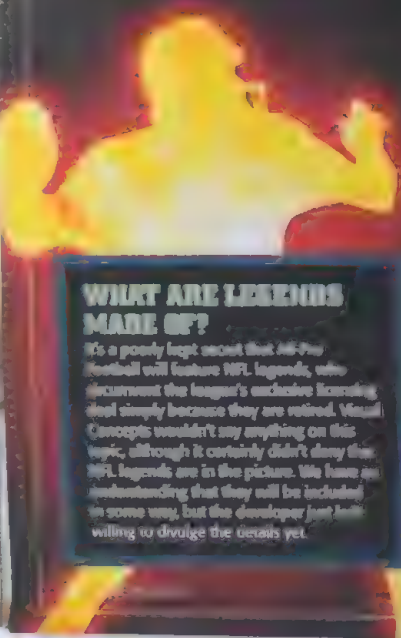
beyond the teams themselves. All-Pro Football 2K8 aims to take the ultimate team sport and turn its focus onto the individual players. This is done by highlighting the separation in skill among players and translating that onto the field. An important part of making individual players stand out is by getting away from the normal 0-100 attribute system we've seen in most sports games. Instead, players will be separated into tiers, with everyone having stats associated with them. These represent the positive and negative traits that define who they are on the field, such as a mobile QB who is a tumbler. Superstars also possess separate special abilities such as being good at fourth-quarter comebacks. These will give them further personality and differentiate them from the regular players. However,

even the lower-ranked players will have key skills that will come in handy. Gamers will build their team from a pool of players. Here is where you can play GM and mold the team to your liking. Because you don't have to wonder about the difference between an 80- or 81-rated wide receiver, you have a better idea how to combine these individuals to shape your team's playing philosophy as well as its overall strengths and weaknesses. Once play begins, you can create and exploit mismatches among players and tailor your game plan to your strengths. This will be immediately evident when you take the game online. Here you can create multiple teams and pick which one gives you the best chance of winning when matched up against your opponent's own creations.



JEFF THOMAS
VICE PRESIDENT OF
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Visual Concepts promises that CPU players will use more play diagrams, and not just other such trickey



WHAT ARE LEGENDS MADE OF?

It's a poorly kept secret that All-Pro Football 2K8 features NFL legends, who document the league's exclusive licensing deal simply because they are retired. Visual Concepts wouldn't say anything on this topic, although it certainly didn't deny that NFL legends are in the picture. We have an understanding that they will be included in some way, but the developer just isn't willing to divulge the details yet.



By making the player aware of the prowess of individual football players and the strategies behind utilizing them, the game actually makes its stars stronger than they might have been if they had been ruled by the NFL license. Because the team isn't bound by trying to recreate how the Patriots play (which games rarely do right) or whether the third-string linebacker has an acceleration rating of 75 or 70, it lets you create and exploit the differences among teams.

A NEW DOWN & DISTANCE

All-Pro's lack of traditional player ratings isn't the only way it will break with convention. Although the developer wouldn't go into detail about the game's league structure, we know that there won't be a franchise mode. No guiding your team through multiple years or drafting for the future. Also missing are his-person football and The Grid. This is disappointing - and Michael Madden got alarmed for its feature pullback when it switched over to the new generation, but Jeff is adamant in the developer's approach. "You have to pick some things and focus. The idea of this game is not to encompass every feature of every football game."

Likewise, although the game will feature a number of customization features for your team, including

options beyond the standard package for online play, you won't be able to recreate NFL teams or players. "I've decided a long time ago we're not doing that," says Jeff. "[That option] is not in the game, and people gotta be aware of that right now. It's not NFL poseur. There's going to be a backlash. I know that, and you know what? Play the game and shut up."

Although seemingly contradictory, his resistance brings out an important point about this game. Instead of barking on familiar territory, Visual Concepts is staking this game's fortunes on showing you what it thinks has been missing from football games in the past - including its own.

"I look at the AI on [NFL] 2K5 now and go, 'Wow, the AI was just stupid. It did stupid things a lot,'" says Jeff. The CPU AI will now make full use of its playbooks, players, and pay more attention to how you play the game - things that were noticeably absent from NFL 2K5. Defenses utilize different formation shells (which you can also use) in order to confuse you. So you might come up to the line of scrimmage and see the defense in a three-deep zone when they're actually running something entirely different.

A more startling example of the strides APF makes is in the running game, where CPU backs have been taught to see holes and cutback lanes to prevent them from running into the backs of their blockers.

In fact, the team has the 70-footway CPU AI on the "I" named after Abe Marino, their producer. Marino started running plays with his hands hidden from view. The test is to see if a defender can correctly guess whether the play they are seeing in the computer is Abe himself. The team's gotten the CPU to mimic human tendencies to the point that nobody's gotten more than three out of five right, and president Greg Thomas went a laughable zero for five.

Perhaps more important than getting your CPU opponent to play correctly, however, is the work being done to make sure your own players respond to your commands. "I want to give them what they want when they press that button," says Jeff, expressing the frustration of gamers the world over when their wide-open receiver can't even move his hands a couple of inches to adjust to the oncoming ball or a defensive back isn't able to swat the ball even though you've put him in the right position.

A key component to stemming this disbelief is refining the game's animation system. We've seen early footage of some of APF's animations, and it's clear that some of the best transitions between player movements from the past have been chopped out, leaving very fluid play - even on complicated matters such as the interaction between the offensive and defensive lines. A good example of the game's



Improved AI, animations, and visuals will make this play even better.

blending of AI and animations is in your QB's ability to throw the ball while he's getting tackled. The resulting toss will be subject to all kinds of variables to determine how bad of a throw it is, but giving the player the option to follow through with a throw or fack the ball before it's released shows a lot of confidence in the gameplay.

OUTSIDE THE LINES

As much as the NFL license benefits a football game, Visual Concepts is going out of its way to make use of those areas that the NFL restricts. In tandem with the game's refined animation system, injuries will now occur in real time. We've seen plays where a guy lands funny and gets his head twisted or he lands on his arm the wrong way producing an injury. Previously, the NFL wouldn't allow this because it didn't like directly associating violent hits with players getting injured. This includes major concussions produced after particularly jarring blows and being able to throw late hits. To be clear, All-Pro is not an over-the-top, Blitz style game; but football is a violent sport, and the team is trying to represent this faithfully without NFL restrictions.

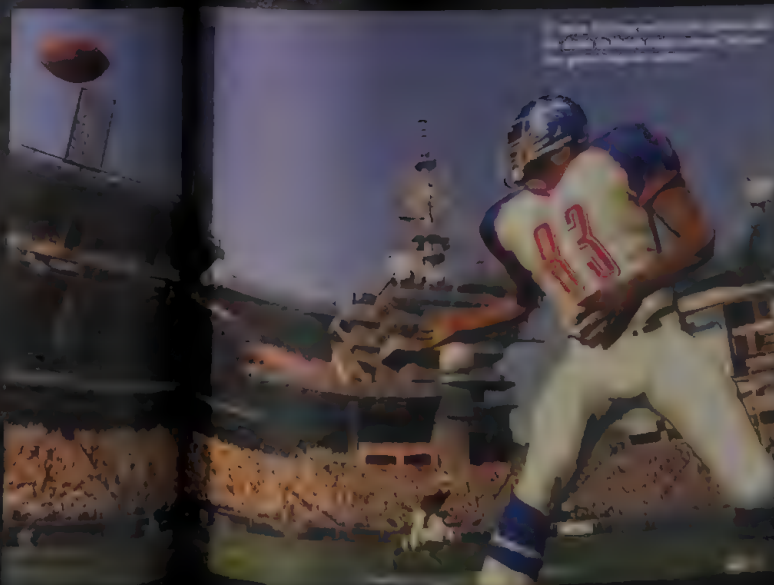
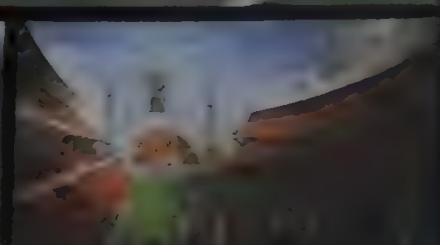
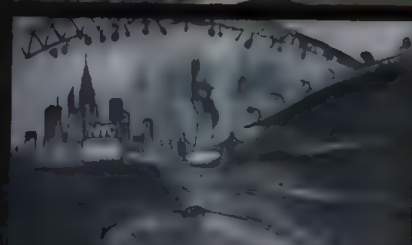
Another area the game can expand on is the actual on-field speech that goes on during a game, whether that's trash talking between players or dialogue between a coach and a QB. The NFL and the Players' Association don't allow for specific dialogue to be assigned to players because it doesn't want to put words in Peyton Manning's mouth, for example. Of course, All-Pro doesn't have to worry about that, so you'll see players and coaches talking to each other complete with full lip-synching. This won't be a constant element of All-Pro Football, but it will be a key element of the game's overall presentation — an area in which Visual Concepts' work is well regarded.

Will it all work? Can you sell a non-licensed football game to a country that is obsessed with the NFL? As confident as the team at Visual Concepts is, those are the million-dollar questions that nobody can answer right now. "We're not sure how everyone's going to take it," admits Greg. "This, to me, is people looking for their football fix. They may also buy Madden, but it's about playing the best one." ■■■



THE STADIUMS

Instead of showing boring fly-by of steel gables in NFL stadiums, All-Pro's digs are styled to the hilt. Each team's stadium like the Rhinos' (see story, column, etc.) will feature their own theme that comes through in the architecture and in events such as touchdown celebrations. The Rhinos' stadium, for example, has an animatronic Rhino that bursts out of the stands. Fans in the crowd will consist of 64 different models complete with 64 different animations. Promotional cutscenes will even zoom in on these fan models. Weather will also be a big part of the stadium experience, right down to creating more slippery playing conditions.



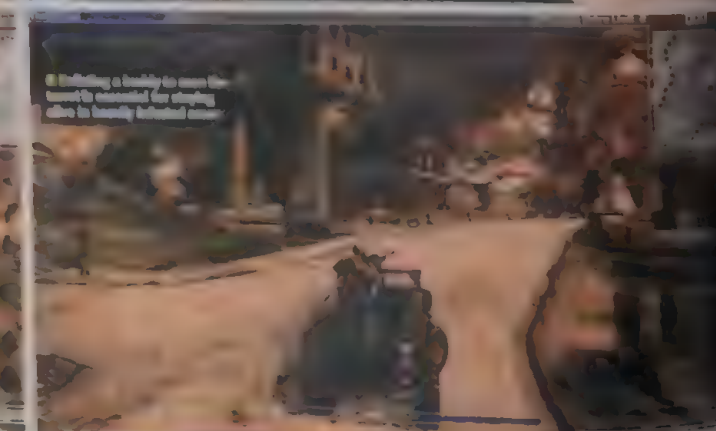
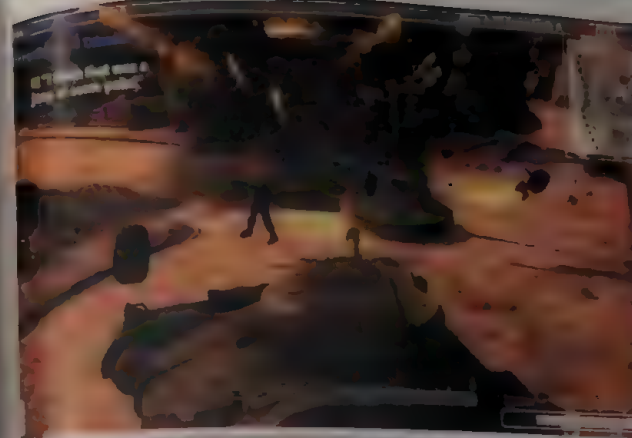
Warhawk

BY JEFF LABRECQUE
 > STYLE > DEVELOPER: NINELEVEN > PUBLISHER: EA
 > RELEASE: OCTOBER 2001

YEP, IT'S JUST MULTIPLAYER

The first time I played Warhawk, I was struck by how much it felt like a multiplayer game. The game is a first-person shooter, but it's designed to be played in a multiplayer environment. The game is set in a desert environment, and the player is a member of the United States Marine Corps. The game is a first-person shooter, but it's designed to be played in a multiplayer environment. The game is set in a desert environment, and the player is a member of the United States Marine Corps. The game is a first-person shooter, but it's designed to be played in a multiplayer environment. The game is set in a desert environment, and the player is a member of the United States Marine Corps.

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Stuntman: Ignition

STOP, DROP, AND ROLL

The history of the war

...the ...

[illegible]

1. The first step is to identify the key components of the system. This includes understanding the hardware, software, and data involved.

[illegible]

THE



16th Annual Meeting

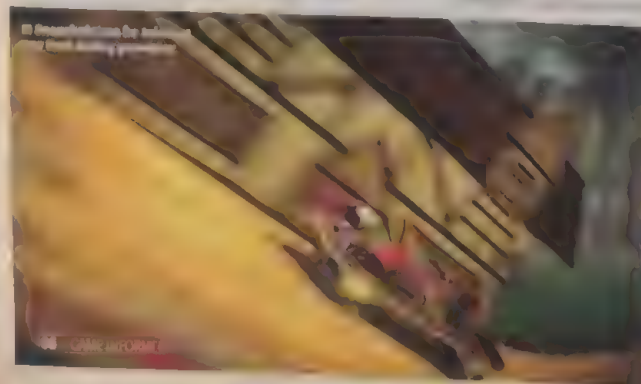
Set in a San Francisco-esque town of doctors, some of the scenes in *Overdrive* can get pretty intense, even to floor your car back to 180 and whip it around 180.

previews



> STYLE _____ > PUBLISHER _____
 > DEVELOPER _____ > RELEASE _____

Some of the most beautiful and most interesting of the world's folk arts are the traditional arts of the Middle East. The region's rich and varied artistic heritage is a testament to the many cultures that have thrived there over the centuries. From the intricate geometric patterns of Islamic art to the vibrant colors of Persian miniatures, the Middle East has produced some of the most remarkable works of art in human history. These arts are not only beautiful but also deeply meaningful, reflecting the values and beliefs of the societies that created them. In this article, we will explore some of the most fascinating traditional arts of the Middle East, from the ancient to the modern.



RP Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information

Microsoft
Small Business Solutions

MASS



STYLE > PUBLISHER > DEVELOPER > INTENDC > RELEASE

After a decade of intense interference from the media, the government, and the public, the book is finally published. But the present discussion of the book is a cold take in the years since its publication.

1. The "Mormon" stamp is not the same as the "Mormon" stamp.
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 10. The "Mormon" stamp is not the same as the "Mormon" stamp.

able to make a positive
contribution to the
the new world order
based on respect for
of existing spheres of
interest.

The following table is arranged on a number of columns to represent how many of the spare image patterns exhibited a particular grossy rock shape. The numbers appear in the winter half of the FOs. The letters in the first and third columns label the patterns. The height of the numbers means, we even caught a glimpse of several different kinds of "spore" patterns. Bio 2 field notes: "The first series of flowers, several mar-

[illegible]

1.1. $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_n$ are the roots of the characteristic polynomial of A .
 1.2. $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_n$ are the eigenvalues of A .
 1.3. $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_n$ are the eigenvalues of A .

was a star-shaped springboard that sent Mano soaring like Superman. We also saw the plumber ride a growing, twisted vine and float around on a wispy flower. In one scene, Mano ran around on a red apple, stomped on a wooden peg, and a worm sprung out of the side providing a bridge to the next apple.

Enemies were relatively few in number, but a few classics did make a brief appearance, including Bullet Bills, the Thwomps, Bob-ombs, and Wigglers (those angry caterpillar dudes). Few bad jokes included bouncing blue sponges and spinning robot toys. At one point, a dinosaur hybrid piranha plant big enough to be a boss broke out of a large egg and charged after Mario.

Super Mario Galaxy appears to be coming along nicely, but without any new playable content we'll have to reserve judgement. Who knows when Nintendo is planning on bringing it to its inevitable home console counterpart, the Game Boy Advance. For the high time year ended for us, despite different news and December, we're betting that Nintendo is saving this for the holidays. ■ ■ ■

ARTIST: JIMMY K. MCNEIL > PUBLISHER: MIDWAY > DEVELOPER: MIDWAY > RELEASE YEAR: 1992

and efficient, and a lot more fun. Playing as two characters is a small price to pay for a more engaging combat system. Fortunately, we can stop the time-lag game we've come to know with the Wii version of this better than going to a new level. Back comes the old, but not quite the same. The team at the Game Boy Advance did a good job of making the old game feel like a new one, but it's not the same.

... accidental activation of the Record button, players must hold down the Record button during the entire span of time they wish to "record" it. As you can see from the screenshots, players will drop the remote halfway and towards the stacks like they're going to do a kick or Scorpion's hook. Hold the button down and up will activate the Record button, and drawing a half-circle around the button activates projectiles like the Scorpion's shot. Once a special is completed, the screen flashes a subtle confirmation and the remote vibrates from the remote speaker. Character movement and jumping

is handled by the push, pull system. First, you get a new machine. You test it. You use a new machine. You get ages players to pull off a chain of specials without mistakes, and in turn helps to learn the new control scheme. The system works smoothly. And it's a very good idea. Smooth, easy, D-100.

Players will push the controllers forward and pull upward to nip off an opponent's head or spread the controllers apart to dismember arms. It's especially fun to twist the controllers to perform a neck snap. Motion controls extend to the extra modes as well. The arena mode is a free-for-all mode and plays a lot like the main game, and the cart-based Motor Kombar utilizes Exotic Trucks brand stuff, steering all in a Madgeeddon World-like way and being a good way for the in-game truckers to kick off these summer sessions in style. It's all a shameless waste. ■■■

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We're not sure where to start. Start with the nature of this new mid-shooting, as we're going to read how the takes fit your imagination. Even if it's murder, death, or even violence. Touch the Devil has some fun comedy to make up for it. Considering the old school idea of a hard gun shooter with the technology added by the DS, Touch the Devil looks like it should deliver a unique experience. It releases this spring.

We're anxious if the game continues to get more complex as the levels continue. As it is, the scenarios we played involved no small amount of challenge, and the simple gameplay seemed like it should be a quality addition to the growing library of adult-oriented DS games. ■■■

We played through the first three levels of this combine-there-and-retro-processed-with-some-of-the-subtle-techniques-that-managed-to-transform-a-simple-range-shooter-into-a-challenging-action-game. As an exceptional piece of music, the game speaks to your cell dear pains with out a seemingly open path to escape him before you. It's not long before you find out where everybody has gone - they're all become zombies! Now there's a surprise. Movement is almost totally automated except for occasional branch into paths that you choose by shooting in one direction or another. Weapon fire is simple act of touching the screen where you'd like to aim, and reloading involves dragging the stylus across from your inventory to the gun. Strategy comes in timing your reloads to match the ebb and flow of zombies that seem so intent on decimating you. There's also the need to spend enough disquisitions, big money, and can saves in each level to boost your health before another round begins. You'll also pick up new weapons as you go, from shotguns to grenades. While we didn't get a chance to check it out this month, the game also supports cooperative play to ease all these



PLAYSTATION 3 | XBOX 360 | PC

DIRT

> PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS > DEVELOPER CODEMASTERS > RELEASE

PLAYING DIRTY

The 1990s have been, more than any other decade in American history, a time of extraordinary change. The American people have seen the end of the Cold War, the end of the Vietnam War, the end of the American dream, the end of the American way of life, the end of the American century, the end of the American century as we know it. The American people have seen the end of the American century as we know it. The American people have seen the end of the American century as we know it.

The first thing I saw when I stepped
 out of the plane was the sun. It was
 bright and hot, and I felt a sense of
 freedom. I had been waiting for this
 moment for so long. I had been told
 that it was the best time to visit, and
 I was not disappointed.

The second thing I saw was the
 people. They were friendly and
 welcoming. I had heard that the
 people were rude, but they were not.
 They were just like everyone else.
 They were just people.

The third thing I saw was the
 food. It was delicious. I had
 heard that the food was bad, but it
 was not. It was just like the food
 I had at home.

The fourth thing I saw was the
 weather. It was perfect. I had
 heard that the weather was bad, but
 it was not. It was just like the
 weather I had at home.

The fifth thing I saw was the
 people. They were friendly and
 welcoming. I had heard that the
 people were rude, but they were not.
 They were just like everyone else.
 They were just people.

[illegible]

...our car since we are such
...alright, we rolled within the
...difficulty you are on will change
...the damage affects your perfor-
...the amateur difficulty, car damage
...change the car's handling, but
...pro, real-world rules apply.
...ted to get our hands on the
...n of this game; thankfully, one
...and the corner. ■ ■ ■

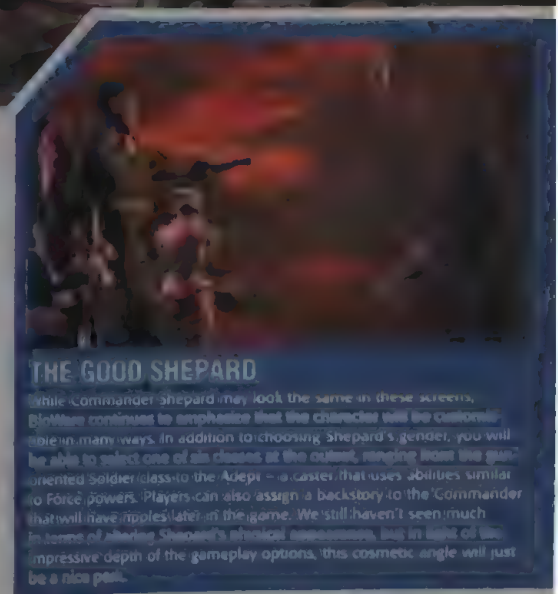


...receiving a long-lost piece of alien
 ...in Mars, humanity was thrust
 ...light, attracting the attention
 ...from hundreds of planets
 ...advanced their civilization
 ...they are ready to take a more
 ...theatrical scene. This is how
 ...know Commander Shepard, the
 ...Mars Effect and the only human ever
 ...the elite force of peace-
 ...
 ...Buttes, morality will play an
 ...Max Effect, though not in a
 ...between good and evil. Players
 ...personality through his actions,
 ...won't give rise to diametrical
 ..."help the wrong" versus "Poison the
 ..."bring down." Instead, you will decide
 ...or isn't willing to cross when
 ...is on the line. Is it accept-
 ...sure someone with crucial
 ...friendly solution possible?
 ...Shepard being referred to by
 ..."space." In the same way

the hero of 24 will bend the rules for the *24* good, players may have to use some questionable methods of persuasion to get the job done.

Even though interacting with other *creatures* comes with the territory, Shepard and his crew aren't a bunch of nancy-pants diplomats. The majority of Mass Effect's gameplay will be strategic gunplay mixing the combat styles of turn-based RPGs (like Knights of the Old Republic) and tactical shooters (like Full Spectrum Warrior). The battles can be fluid if you prefer a more action-oriented approach or you can pause the game, giving you time to issue commands and catch your breath. Regardless of which method you choose, the array of customizable skills, weapons, and armor should ensure that the formula stays fresh as you explore the hundreds of available planets.

Mass Effect is unquestionably one of the heavy hitters in the Xbox 360 lineup, and every new bit of information reinforces that fact. With the game drawing close to release, players will soon find themselves in a pivotal role, shaping how humans will be perceived by other beings throughout the cosmos. ■ ■ ■

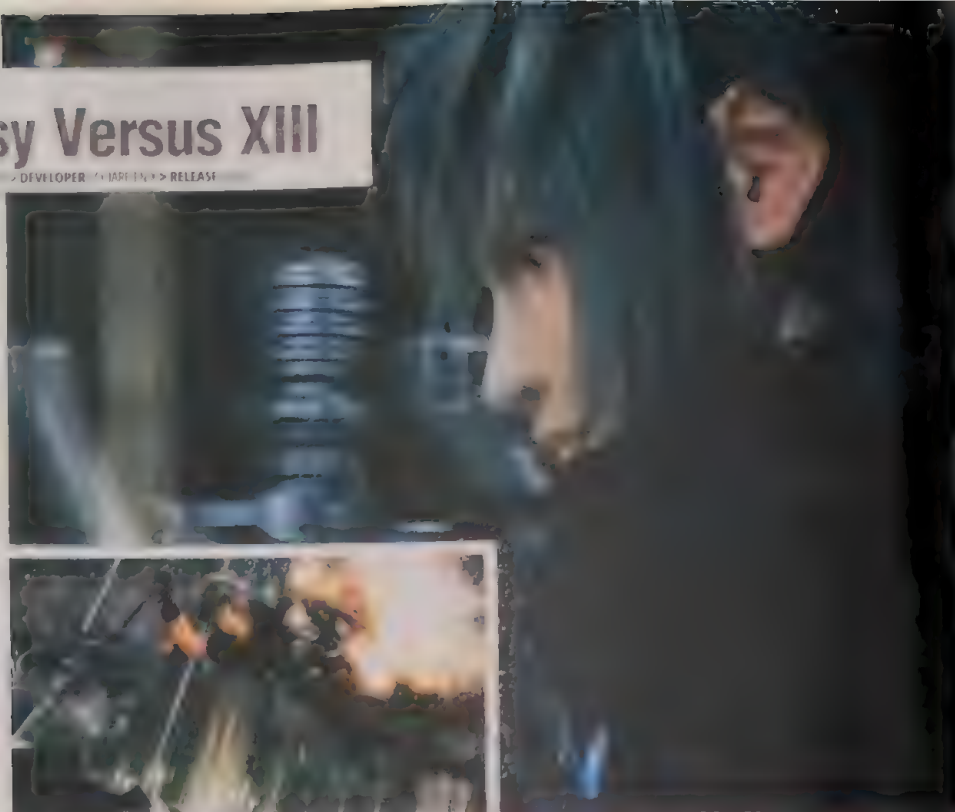


Even though combat in Vietnam, there (left) isn't much room for strategy.

NAME	TYPE	PRICE	REVIEW	REMARKS
1. STYLE 1-PLAYER AC	1-PLAYER	14.95	4.5	1.5
2. STYLE 2-PLAYER AC	2-PLAYER	19.95	4.5	1.5
3. STYLE 3-PLAYER AC	3-PLAYER	24.95	4.5	1.5
4. STYLE 4-PLAYER AC	4-PLAYER	29.95	4.5	1.5
5. STYLE 5-PLAYER AC	5-PLAYER	34.95	4.5	1.5
6. STYLE 6-PLAYER AC	6-PLAYER	39.95	4.5	1.5
7. STYLE 7-PLAYER AC	7-PLAYER	44.95	4.5	1.5
8. STYLE 8-PLAYER AC	8-PLAYER	49.95	4.5	1.5
9. STYLE 9-PLAYER AC	9-PLAYER	54.95	4.5	1.5
10. STYLE 10-PLAYER AC	10-PLAYER	59.95	4.5	1.5
11. STYLE 11-PLAYER AC	11-PLAYER	64.95	4.5	1.5
12. STYLE 12-PLAYER AC	12-PLAYER	69.95	4.5	1.5
13. STYLE 13-PLAYER AC	13-PLAYER	74.95	4.5	1.5
14. STYLE 14-PLAYER AC	14-PLAYER	79.95	4.5	1.5
15. STYLE 15-PLAYER AC	15-PLAYER	84.95	4.5	1.5
16. STYLE 16-PLAYER AC	16-PLAYER	89.95	4.5	1.5
17. STYLE 17-PLAYER AC	17-PLAYER	94.95	4.5	1.5
18. STYLE 18-PLAYER AC	18-PLAYER	99.95	4.5	1.5
19. STYLE 19-PLAYER AC	19-PLAYER	104.95	4.5	1.5
20. STYLE 20-PLAYER AC	20-PLAYER	109.95	4.5	1.5
21. STYLE 21-PLAYER AC	21-PLAYER	114.95	4.5	1.5
22. STYLE 22-PLAYER AC	22-PLAYER	119.95	4.5	1.5
23. STYLE 23-PLAYER AC	23-PLAYER	124.95	4.5	1.5
24. STYLE 24-PLAYER AC	24-PLAYER	129.95	4.5	1.5
25. STYLE 25-PLAYER AC	25-PLAYER	134.95	4.5	1.5
26. STYLE 26-PLAYER AC	26-PLAYER	139.95	4.5	1.5
27. STYLE 27-PLAYER AC	27-PLAYER	144.95	4.5	1.5
28. STYLE 28-PLAYER AC	28-PLAYER	149.95	4.5	1.5
29. STYLE 29-PLAYER AC	29-PLAYER	154.95	4.5	1.5
30. STYLE 30-PLAYER AC	30-PLAYER	159.95	4.5	1.5
31. STYLE 31-PLAYER AC	31-PLAYER	164.95	4.5	1.5
32. STYLE 32-PLAYER AC	32-PLAYER	169.95	4.5	1.5
33. STYLE 33-PLAYER AC	33-PLAYER	174.95	4.5	1.5
34. STYLE 34-PLAYER AC	34-PLAYER	179.95	4.5	1.5
35. STYLE 35-PLAYER AC	35-PLAYER	184.95	4.5	1.5
36. STYLE 36-PLAYER AC	36-PLAYER	189.95	4.5	1.5
37. STYLE 37-PLAYER AC	37-PLAYER	194.95	4.5	1.5
38. STYLE 38-PLAYER AC	38-PLAYER	199.95	4.5	1.5
39. STYLE 39-PLAYER AC	39-PLAYER	204.95	4.5	1.5
40. STYLE 40-PLAYER AC	40-PLAYER	209.95	4.5	1.5
41. STYLE 41-PLAYER AC	41-PLAYER	214.95	4.5	1.5
42. STYLE 42-PLAYER AC	42-PLAYER	219.95	4.5	1.5
43. STYLE 43-PLAYER AC	43-PLAYER	224.95	4.5	1.5
44. STYLE 44-PLAYER AC	44-PLAYER	229.95	4.5	1.5
45. STYLE 45-PLAYER AC	45-PLAYER	234.95	4.5	1.5
46. STYLE 46-PLAYER AC	46-PLAYER	239.95	4.5	1.5
47. STYLE 47-PLAYER AC	47-PLAYER	244.95	4.5	1.5
48. STYLE 48-PLAYER AC	48-PLAYER	249.95	4.5	1.5
49. STYLE 49-PLAYER AC	49-PLAYER	254.95	4.5	1.5
50. STYLE 50-PLAYER AC	50-PLAYER	259.95	4.5	1.5
51. STYLE 51-PLAYER AC	51-PLAYER	264.95	4.5	1.5
52. STYLE 52-PLAYER AC	52-PLAYER	269.95	4.5	1.5
53. STYLE 53-PLAYER AC	53-PLAYER	274.95	4.5	1.5
54. STYLE 54-PLAYER AC	54-PLAYER	279.95	4.5	1.5
55. STYLE 55-PLAYER AC	55-PLAYER	284.95	4.5	1.5
56. STYLE 56-PLAYER AC	56-PLAYER	289.95	4.5	1.5
57. STYLE 57-PLAYER AC	57-PLAYER	294.95	4.5	1.5
58. STYLE 58-PLAYER AC	58-PLAYER	299.95	4.5	1.5
59. STYLE 59-PLAYER AC	59-PLAYER	304.95	4.5	1.5
60. STYLE 60-PLAYER AC	60-PLAYER	309.95	4.5	1.5

NAME RECOGNITION

W



What's the purpose
of a pygmy Chihuahua?



I'm an accessory..
like a chic handbag,
a vintage necklace,
or...

A pair of shoes.



No, not a pair of socks.
I would think you'd understand, being so stylized yourself.

hold up there, Napoleon.
I'm more than stylish.
I'm also crazy versatile.



I'm versatile, too. I can wear a funny hat or a little leather jacket.



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PLAYSTATION 3

Final Fantasy XIII

> STYLE <NAME> <PUBLISHER>
> DEVELOPER <ADDRESS> <RELEASE>

LIGHTNING, CLOUD, AND SQUALL

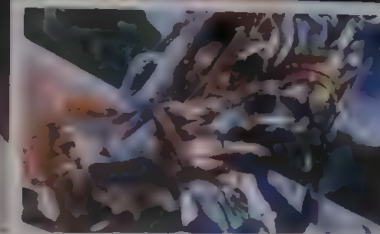
It may seem a little early to start talking about Final Fantasy XIII, especially since plenty of gamers still have their hands full with Vazmat and Zodiark in FF XII. Even so, habits have started trickling, both regarding the next entry in this franchise's mainline.

set in a divided land, tensions are running high between the inhabitants of a lower world and an upper world - a theme that should feel familiar to Final Fantasy fans. The protagonist, a woman named Lightning, is believed to be an instrumental force to change through whether she is a destroyer or savior remains to be seen. What we do know is that she has a combination of high technology and magic to become an incredibly powerful warrior.

Following the example set by F. N. ...
... that the ...
... again happen in real-time ...
... like the random encounters

of his past are now gone for good. He cannot remember his never-forgotten 1960s and 1970s, and that's what's sad, and certainly a great loss. But I will be happy to know that he is enjoying life. The journey will be useful beyond just moving up for a one-off attack. For instance, she has the ability to transform a car or motorcycle, which suggests that she may play a large role outside of battles as well. If Banard transforms into a grizzly, this could be the best place ever.

Love is an enormous popularity, even, from a few better than many fantasy, resembled a charming, several times, yet the other, not to let down and a commonality. If will shut it, there's, and I must been made a few times, expect, will come and meet, with the game's other elements, it is not a bad that will have to wait, not use resulted in a lot of other, the a showed. ■■■





Tomb Raider: Anniversary

THE FIRST WAY TO LAZARUS

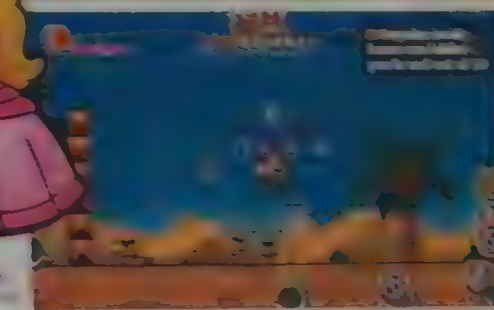
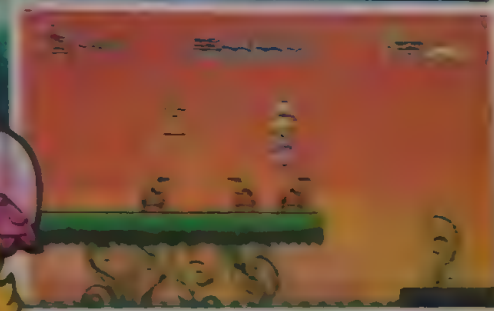
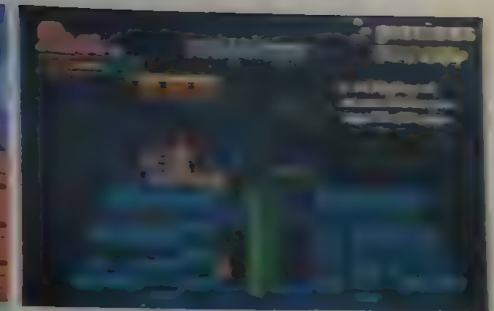
Nine years after her debut, Lara Croft is back in the Tomb Raider: Anniversary. The game is a direct sequel to the original, but it's not just a rehash of the old. It's a new adventure, one that takes Lara to new heights of danger and discovery. The game is a love letter to the original, but it's also a new beginning. Lara is back, and she's ready to take on the world.

At the heart of the game is a story that is as compelling as the action. Lara is on a quest to uncover the secrets of an ancient civilization. The game is a journey of discovery, one that takes Lara to the most beautiful and dangerous places on the planet. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Legend's insistence on interesting level design is now significantly less. The game is a puzzle, one that is as challenging as the action. The game is a test of skill, one that will push you to your limits. The game is a work of art, one that is as beautiful as the action.

Lara's acrobatic and combat abilities are now to expand to meet the new challenges. The game is a new frontier, one that is as exciting as the action. The game is a new beginning, one that will take Lara to new heights of danger and discovery. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

The new use of Anniversary is a testament to the game's success. The game is a new frontier, one that is as exciting as the action. The game is a new beginning, one that will take Lara to new heights of danger and discovery. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.



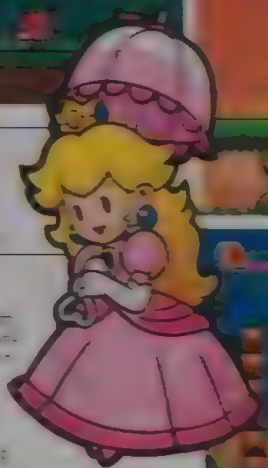
Super Paper Mario


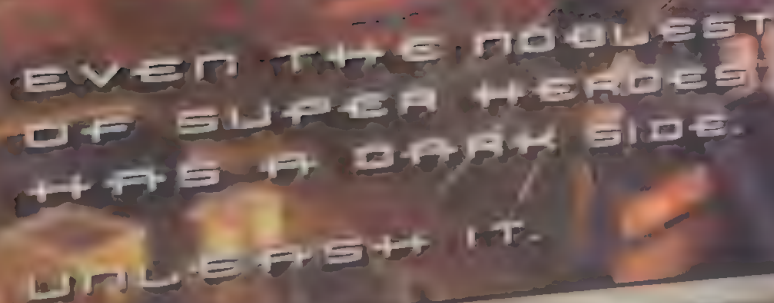
COMING FROM A NEW ANGLE

When you think of Mario, you think of a plumber. But when you think of Super Paper Mario, you think of a paper plumber. The game is a new frontier, one that is as exciting as the action. The game is a new beginning, one that will take Mario to new heights of danger and discovery. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

The game is a love letter to the original, but it's also a new beginning. Mario is back, and he's ready to take on the world. The game is a journey of discovery, one that takes Mario to the most beautiful and dangerous places on the planet. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

The game is a testament to the success of the original. The game is a new frontier, one that is as exciting as the action. The game is a new beginning, one that will take Mario to new heights of danger and discovery. The game is a masterpiece of storytelling, one that will keep you on the edge of your seat.





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ADVERTON

11

COLLEGIATE

[illegible]

GameStop

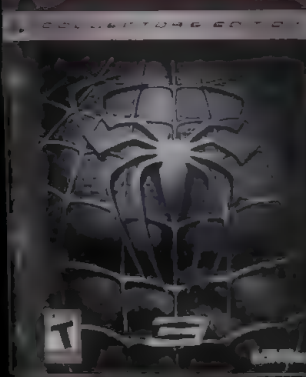
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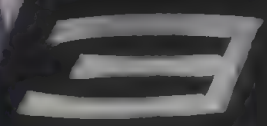
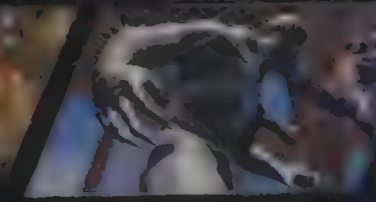
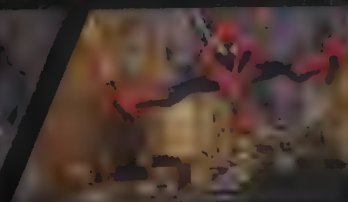
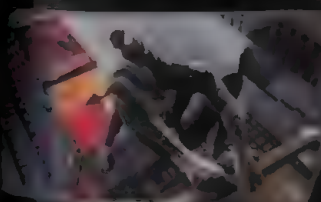
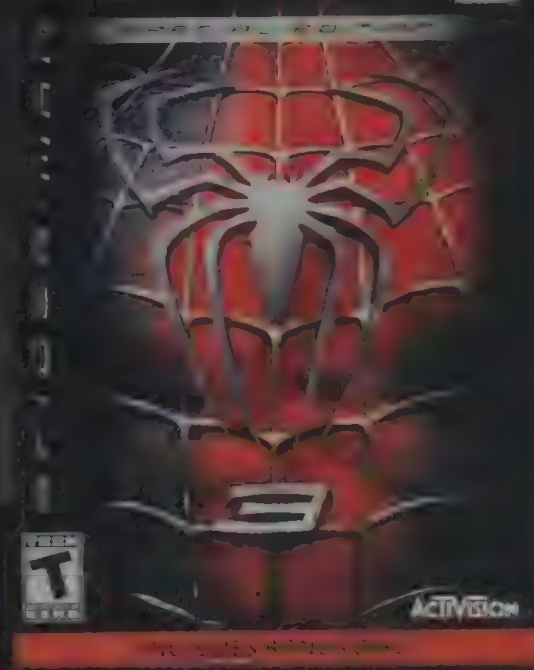
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PlayStation 2



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PHOTOPHILE

Mini Previews With Big Pictures

XBOX 360 / PC

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel

The original Sacred managed to score some buzz among the Diablo flock, at least in 2004. Now developer Ascaron is hoping to gain even more ground with the sequel as it moves to full 3D. Players will choose from six character types including the winged Seraphim shown here. Most of the characters have a light or shadow path and four main 3D-hour quests. Friends can team up for two-player coop on one Xbox 360 or bring it up to four over Xbox Live. Those who prefer competition can duke it out in the PvP or PVE arena mode in hopes of nabbing a prime leaderboard slot. Ascaron is shooting for an early 2006 release and expects to announce a publisher soon.



NINTENDO DS

Jam Sessions

Now pretending you are a guitar hero and actually becoming one, Jam Sessions is bringing your DS's Superstar title into the DS's DS. The game turns your DS into a virtual guitar, letting you strum on the touch screen and rotate over all seven chords using the D-pad and left shoulder button. Different chords can be mapped however you want them, and guitar effects can be added on. Jam Sessions has a variety of songs and their chords will be included in the game. Jam Sessions is a fun game, but the Jam Sessions is that you can make your own songs too.



PC

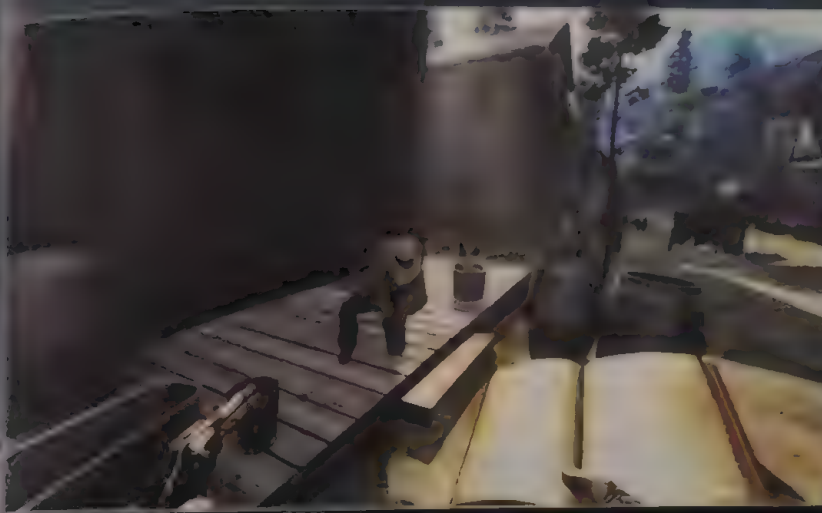
Infernal

Anyone remember in 1996, the Steve Jackson pen & paper RPG that had players leading a secret war on Earth between the forces of Heaven and Hell? Well, it was very popular - the setting was crazy awesome, but the rule system was a bit too complex. Now, the setting has been reimagined and the rule system is a lot simpler. Infernal has a similar (and similarly sweet-sounding) setting, where you're controlling a fallen angel working for Satan. The gun-slinging gameplay is fast, shooting and allows for some interesting puzzles. Look for this to hit a PC near you on May 8, courtesy of Eden and developer Playlogic.

XBOX 360 / PC

Call of Juarez

(Originally scheduled to ship for PC last fall, Ubisoft delayed the U.S. release of Call of Juarez to its current summer release date. Recently, the publisher announced that the game will also ship in Xbox 360 and Direct2D 10 for Windows Vista flavors as well. Aside from being entertaining to say "Juarez" just rolls off the tongue!) Call of Juarez also offers entertainment in the form of playing two characters - one hunting the mine - on their linked path through the Wild West. The FPS action looks like you'd expect, with the exception of the hunted character's use of a whip to navigate portions of the environment and the hunter's ability to independently control his two pistols at the same time. The suspense-filled story, however, is the game's biggest selling point - and we can't speak to that until we have the full version in our hands.



PLAYSTATION 3

SingStar

Even as Sony is pumping their latest SingStar PS2 game out to market (see this month's review on page 86), it's already busy hyping the upcoming PS3 version of its popular karaoke game. Tapping into the online capabilities of the PS3, aspiring singers will be able to download an array of new songs/videos in addition to the approximately 50 songs that will ship on the disc. Of course, these songs won't be free, but they should offer a fun way to expand the content of the game. Uploads are an equally fun addition, since you'll be able to post your videos and (green) audio clips for the rest of the world to enjoy. The trademarked "SingStar" will be organized so you can explore your favorite genre and albums, and will also allow viewing of previous clips before you buy. Europe will get to start singing as soon as June, but it looks as if U.S. gamers won't be able to take to the stage until sometime this fall.

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(XBOX 360 / Wii / PLAYSTATION 2) / GAMECUBE

TMNT

> STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM > PUBLISHER UBISOFT
> DEVELOPER UBISOFT MONTREAL > RELEASE MARCH 20 > ESRB E10+

NOW WITH 100% LESS COWABUNGA

After a decade of being the most beloved cartoon franchise in America, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles have finally made it to the big screen. The result is a movie that is as much a love letter to the franchise as it is a tribute to the medium of film. The movie is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie."

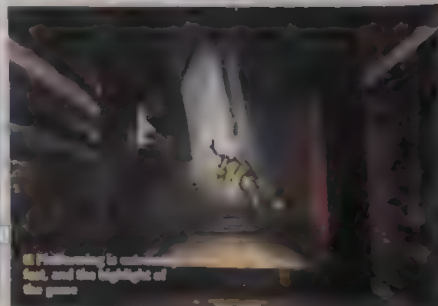
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edge

When All Comes A-Go-Go, It's a Great Day

The different versions offer a very similar experience, but surprisingly, the 360 is the place to go for graphical superiority, as the most 100% of the score Achievement Points are earned. The Wii version plays just fine, with some very simple tricks and little enemies on the screen to replace the normal attack button, but if you really want to look like a pro, I mean that's the way to go. You have to win it.



At 100% completion, the turtles and the highlight of the game

BOTTOM LINE **7.5**

- > Concept: The turtles are back, and they're better than ever.
- > Graphics: The graphics are top-notch, and the game is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling.
- > Sound: The sound is excellent, and the music is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling.
- > Playability: The game is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie."
- > Entertainment: The game is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie."
- > Replay Value: The game is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie."



Partner moves are almost as close as you'll get to seeing another character onscreen at once



Each character has their own unique special move

Bottom Opinion

The movie is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie." The movie is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie." The movie is a masterpiece of cinematic storytelling, and it is a shame that it is being reviewed in a magazine that is not even allowed to mention the word "movie."

NISSAN FAIRLADY Z CUSTOM EDITION

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FORZA 2

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Medal of Honor: Vanguard

CASHING OUT

BOTTOM LINE 6

: action of WWII — KATO

Virtua Tennis 3

I'M MAD LIKE MCENROE



10

• All the simulations are based on the real-life experiences of people like you.

Figure 1

BOTTOM LINE 7

Scanned Cyrimine

but, can't be, 'at least'
that it is not, 'at least'

GAMEINFORMER SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

A collage of video game covers. Visible titles include Mario Hoops 3-on-3, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories, Final Fantasy VII, and others. The covers are overlapping and set against a dark, textured background.

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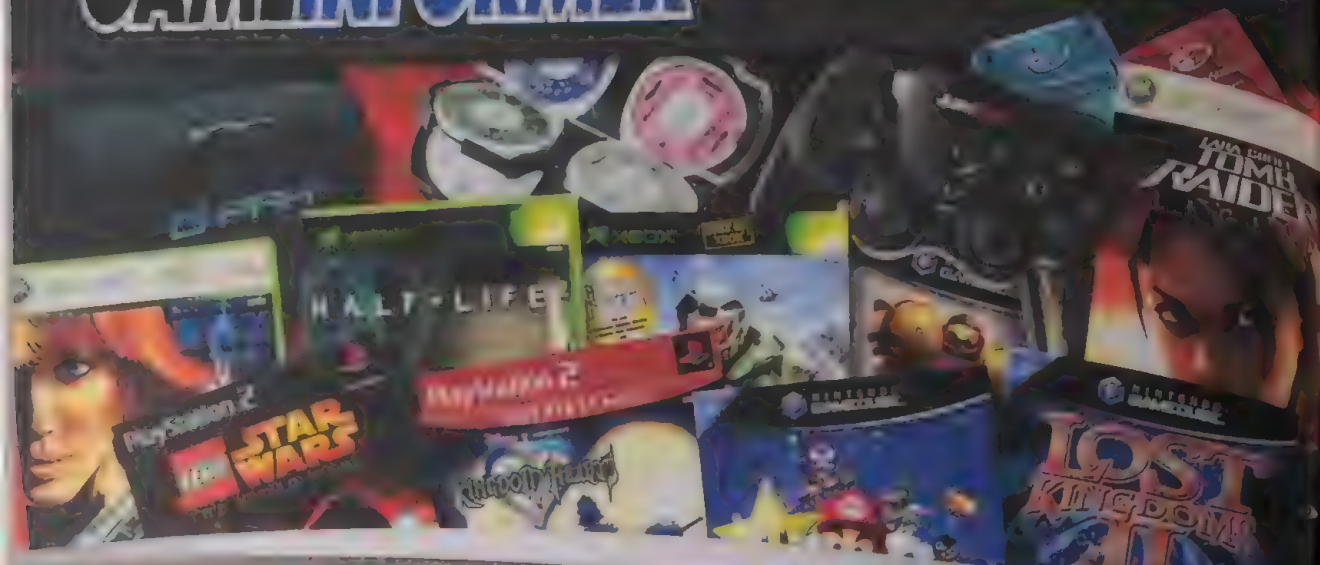
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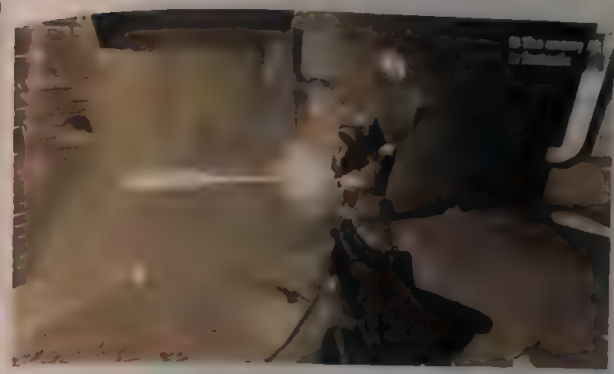
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PLAYSTATION 3 F.E.A.R.: First Encounter Assault Recon

> STYLE 1: PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA PLAYSTATION NETWORK) > PUBLISHER SHREYA > DEVELOPER DAY 1 STUDIOS/MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS > RELEASE APRIL 24 > ESRB M

FEAR NO EVIL

I was very excited to get a chance to play F.E.A.R., which was one of those wildly acclaimed games that somehow avoided playing on PC and Xbox 360. Although the basis of this PS3 port (the original PC title) is now a couple years old, I'm pleased to report that F.E.A.R.'s taut gameplay can still hold its own with the best of the genre.

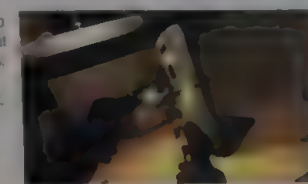
Since I imagine many of the people that play this on PS3, like myself, will be approaching this game for the first time, here are the basics: You are a special forces soldier tasked with tracking down Paxton Fettel, a madman who controls a battalion of genetically engineered super-soldiers with his mind. Along the way, you'll uncover a dark conspiracy involving the government, a large corporation, and a scary little girl that appears to you in visions. Of course, there's much more to this than meets the eye.

In practice, F.E.A.R. plays out as a finely tuned shooter that distinguishes itself by the copious use of slow-motion shooters à la Max Payne and fairly by-the-numbers scare tactics. The good news is that this is one of the most fun games to run and gun in that we've played in ages. While the control lead-on, F.E.A.R. really comes alive with the use of its AI, which is simply

some of the best I've ever seen. These super-soldiers are extremely canny, and will pursue, flank, and take cover with ruthless efficiency. All this makes for a single-player campaign that feels as fluid and engaging as a multiplayer bout. Thankfully, once you master the AI, there are human opponents to be had in the solid if not spectacular online component.

However, a few major flaws keep this from being a genre-busting title on par with Half-Life 2 or Halo. For one, the level designs are, at times, downright horrid. Even though almost the entire game takes place in staid industrial and office buildings, the map layouts are mind-bogglingly confusing for no apparent reason.

You'll oftentimes spend as much time wandering around lost as you will shooting. Also, for all the emphasis placed on the scary aspects of this game, I didn't really feel that the plot or writing was on par with the excellently conceived gameplay. Despite its cinematic pretensions, F.E.A.R. succeeds largely on good old fashioned gunplay, and I'm more than okay with that. —MATT



BOTTOM LINE **8.25**

> **Concept:** F.E.A.R. is a pretty solidly engrossing experience, but it's not a very original one.

> **Graphics:** While the game is a nice-looking FPS for PS3, it's not a great one. The Xbox 360 or PC versions, it's a nice, clean-looking FPS for PS3.

> **Sound:** I don't often knock a game for poor timing, but some irritating sound effects were way too loud. In addition, some of the phone message audio was nearly incomprehensible.

> **Playability:** While the Swans aren't the greatest for FPS, this game plays fast and furious with no major headaches.

> **Value:** F.E.A.R. is a solid shooter that doesn't totally fulfill the promise of its premise. Still, given the PS3 library right now, this is almost mandatory for PS3 owners.

> **Display Value:** Moderately High

Second Opinion **7.75**

While this is all fine and good, it still doesn't solve the problems I have with the game. The AI is great, but the game is not a very original one. The graphics are nice, but the game is not a great one. The sound is good, but the game is not a great one. The playability is good, but the game is not a great one. The value is good, but the game is not a great one.

PLAYSTATION 3

The Godfather: The Don's Edition

> STYLE 1: PLAYER ACTION/RACING > PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS > DEVELOPER EA REDWOOD SHORE > RELEASE MARCH 26 > ESRB M



YET ANOTHER OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

As long as they keep making new systems, EA is apparently dead set making sure that its game based on the legendary Godfather films makes an appearance. I've played various versions of what is largely the same game on PlayStation 2, Xbox, PSP, Xbox 360, and now the PS3. Each time I play it, I can see that some effort has been made to enhance the game. This time around, there are some new contract hits and rival strongholds to capture, made easier by a new weapons system which utilizes a selection wheel similar to that of Ratchet & Clank. The PS3's Sixaxis controller is used to make grapple moves more difficult and more precise, with opponents around for vicious smashes with the controller's motion sensing.

While this is all fine and good, it still doesn't solve the problems I have with the game. The AI is great, but the game is not a very original one. The graphics are nice, but the game is not a great one. The sound is good, but the game is not a great one. The playability is good, but the game is not a great one. The value is good, but the game is not a great one.



BOTTOM LINE **7.5**

> **Concept:** The Godfather is a pretty solidly engrossing experience, but it's not a very original one.

> **Graphics:** While the game is a nice-looking FPS for PS3, it's not a great one. The Xbox 360 or PC versions, it's a nice, clean-looking FPS for PS3.

> **Sound:** I don't often knock a game for poor timing, but some irritating sound effects were way too loud. In addition, some of the phone message audio was nearly incomprehensible.

> **Playability:** While the Swans aren't the greatest for FPS, this game plays fast and furious with no major headaches.

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PLAYSTATION 2

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories

PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR GAMES > DEVELOPER ROCKSTAR GAMES/ROCKSTAR NORTH > RELEASE MARCH 6 > ESRB M

JUST A PORT?

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories is a port of the original Grand Theft Auto: Vice City from the PlayStation 2 to the PlayStation 2. The game is a third-person action-adventure game set in the fictional city of Vice City. The game follows the story of Vincent "Vic" Vance, a former convict who has been released from prison and is now working as a taxi driver. Vic is recruited by a mysterious figure to help him take over the city. The game features a large open world with various missions, side quests, and a rich soundtrack. The graphics are a mix of 2D and 3D, with a retro aesthetic that pays homage to the original Vice City. The game is rated M for Mature due to its violent content and strong language.

the random denizens of the city. The game flows like most of the other GTA games, with a mix of missions and side quests. The story is a mix of original and recycled material, with some missions being direct ports from the original Vice City. The game is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a retro aesthetic that pays homage to the original Vice City. The game is rated M for Mature due to its violent content and strong language.

over and over. Graphically, Vice City could certainly use some cleanup. While the PSP was able to hide some of the glaring flaws, the larger TV screen connected to your PC should reveal a world of mud textures and blocky character models. And, going back to the standard, but not anymore. Luckily, the audio production is still top-notch, with satisfying voice work from the main character, even if it's a bit repetitive. The game is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a retro aesthetic that pays homage to the original Vice City. The game is rated M for Mature due to its violent content and strong language.

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BOTTOM LINE 7.75

> **Concept:** Return to the '80s in this port of the PSP crime simulator.

> **Graphics:** Poor texture work and overall quality makes this look worse than GTA should at this point.

> **Sound:** A fantastic soundtrack and high-quality voiceovers have never been a problem for the series, and that's still true.

> **Playability:** Easy to pick up and have fun, but the gun target requires an upgrade.

> **Entertainment:** It's not even close to the best this franchise has to offer. It's still a fun way to induce in a little make-believe violence.

> **Replay Value:** Moderate.

Second Opinion 8.0

I'm immersed in a story about the seedier elements of the criminal underworld in a time period ripe for snarky pop cultural satire, and in a city where muzzle flashes and neon light up the night. I feel like I've come home to the greatest game from five years ago. Even the newly added empire-building elements - where you acquire as well as upgrade various businesses - are a great addition that I want to see again. This entry has all of GTA's trademark wit and humor, and this series still has some of the best soundtracks out there. Of course, sometimes it's hard to come home. GTA's Achilles heel of constant repetition is still there, and you're never really sure if the game is as fun as it once was. But, for now, it's time for a new beginning. —MILLER

PS2 QUICKIES

PLAYSTATION 2

Meet the Robinsons

> **STYLE:** 1 PLAYER ACTION
> **PUBLISHER:** DISNEY
> **DEVELOPER:** JAMAL
> **RELEASE:** MARCH 6 > **ESRB:** E



BOTTOM LINE 7

Meet the Robinsons does everything I respect about a licensed game, and more. It's a good thing, then, that our expectations of a licensed product have risen so high. It takes the film's art assets to good effect, putting in a lot of effort to make the game look like a movie. The game is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a retro aesthetic that pays homage to the original Robinsons. The game is rated E for Everyone due to its non-violent content and strong language.

PLAYSTATION 2

Singstar Pop

> **STYLE:** 1 TO 8 PLAYER MUSIC
> **PUBLISHER:** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
> **DEVELOPER:** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
> **RELEASE:** APRIL 1 > **ESRB:** CO



BOTTOM LINE 8

Singstar Pop is a music game that allows up to eight players to sing along to popular songs. The game features a variety of songs from different eras and genres, and it includes a variety of features that make it a fun and engaging experience. The game is rated CO for Children's Objectives due to its non-violent content and strong language.



PLAYSTATION 2

Dawn of Mana

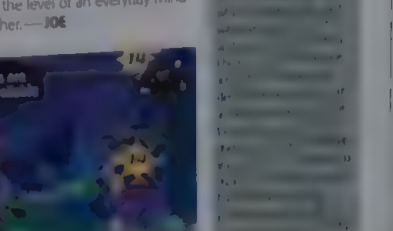
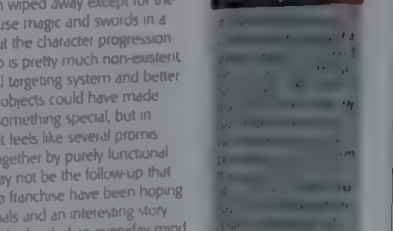
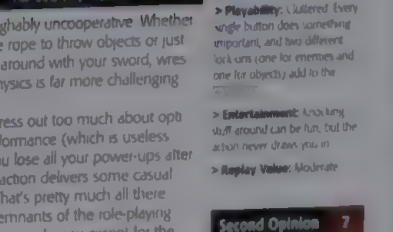
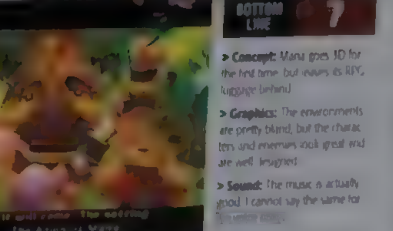
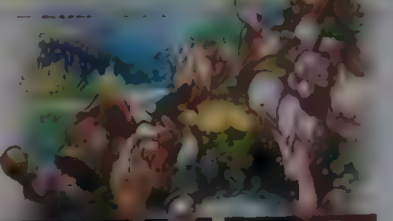
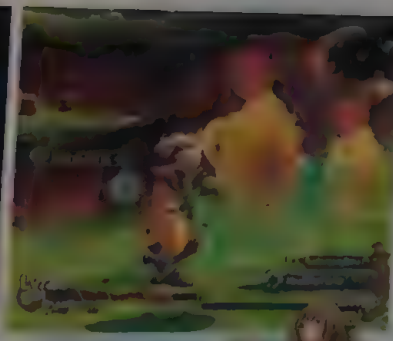
> **STYLE:** 1 PLAYER ACTION > **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
> **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE ENIX > **RELEASE:** MAY 22 > **ESRB:** T

MAKE IT LIKE A MANA

I have a lot of fondness and respect for the Mana series. It helped define the whole action/RPG genre, and there was a time when Secret of Mana spent several consecutive months in my SNES. I wish I could say that Dawn of Mana is a return to form after years of side-stories and rehashes, but it isn't. It further dilutes the Mana name with wads of mediocre combat and barely a trace of the role-playing elements that once made it popular.

The greater focus on action isn't an entirely lost cause, since the gameplay manages to integrate cool concepts beyond mashing the square button. The key is the main character's versatile weapon, which can be used as a sword, slingshot, or grapping rope. Every area is full of logs, rocks, and various exploding vegetables that can be tossed at enemies, sending them into a panic. Then you kill them. It's possible to take them out by just bullying through, but the rewards (like more power, health, and magic) are much greater if you use the environment wisely.

It may sound promising, but this emphasis on scattered junk is where Dawn of Mana hits its biggest hurdle. Sending a mixed signal, the game says it's important to use objects, but makes it difficult and frustrating to do so. The



BOTTOM LINE 7

> **Concept:** Mana goes 3D for the first time, but suffers as a result.

> **Graphics:** The environments are pretty bland, but the character models and enemy look great and are well designed.

> **Sound:** The music is actually good. I cannot say the same for the voice acting.

> **Playability:** Cluttered. Every single button does something important, and two different lock-ons (one for enemies and one for objects) add to the confusion.

> **Entertainment:** Knowing stuff around can be fun, but the action never draws you in.

> **Replay Value:** Moderate.

Second Opinion 7

Dawn of Mana is a role-playing game that allows up to four players to explore a vast, open world. The game features a variety of quests, side quests, and a rich soundtrack. The game is rated T for Teen due to its non-violent content and strong language.

Traveling these days...with the lines and the crowds and the body searches.

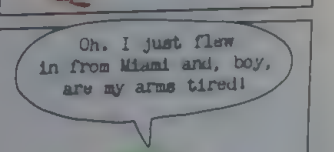


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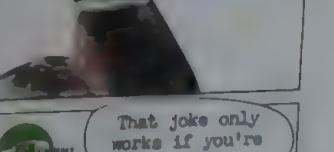
Flying is a pain. That's why I road trip.



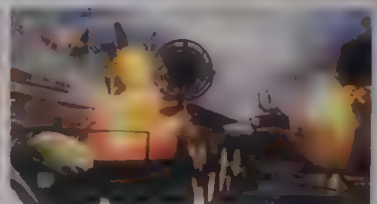
Oh, I just flew in from Miami and, boy, are my arms tired!



That joke only works if you're not a duck.



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XBOX 360

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

STYLE: TACTICAL SHOOTER PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: PLYMOUTH ENTERTAINMENT RATED: M RELEASE: MARCH 8 ESRB: T

THE GHOSTS MAKE A BORDER RUN

WHILE THE U.S. President secures and the Mexican border is the first episode of the Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

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BOTTOM LINE 8.75

> Concept: Keep the Mexicans at bay and out of the United States (the militants, not the immigrants).

> Graphics: South of the border has never looked better—before, after, and during the explosive firefights.

> Sound: Amazing battlefield sound effects are tempered by the cheesy '80s action flick score.

> Playability: The controls feel slightly less impressive after playing its more polished cousin, Rainbow Six Vegas.

> Entertainment: A solid single-player, stay for the amazing multiplayer.

> Replay Value: High.

a full-blown sequel. While it still delivers many riveting combat experiences, they aren't plentiful enough to keep the game from feeling like a step down from its cousin, Rainbow Six Vegas. Enemies still make poor decisions during firefights, and a perfect dead soldier, who have felt the wrath of my sniper rifle. In a previous game, you would think other soldiers would avoid this meat grinder. But no—they foolishly charge from safe cover locations to join the bloody fray of fallen comrades. The cover system, which is still operable, feels clunky now compared to the superior RSV offering. Maybe it's just my weariness, but the grenade system in GRAW doesn't feel as polished as other Clancy titles. It's not uncommon to find a grenade that my entire squad as they're advancing. It's a window or cover point instead of finding by the intended target. It's also a pain to switch out of your primary weapon just to throw a grenade.

While GRAW 2 may have fallen behind the excellent Rainbow Six Vegas, its great multiplayer and expansive single-player storyline still make this game a fun duty worth taking. —BERTZ

Second Opinion 9

It's a little bit of a pump-and-priming exercise, but it's a good one. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico. The game is a tactical shooter that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

XBOX 360

Earth Defense Force 2017

STYLE: 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION PUBLISHER: D3 DEVELOPER: SANDLOT RELEASE: MARCH 20 ESRB: T



BOTTOM LINE 8

> Concept: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

> Graphics: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

> Sound: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

> Playability: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

> Entertainment: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

> Replay Value: A silly, over-the-top action game that focuses on the border between the United States and Mexico.

THEY CAME FROM SPACE

Alien invaders have descended upon Earth, and it's up to you, a faceless soldier in the Earth Defense Force, to give these unfriendly trespassers a proper rocket-to-the-face welcome. Part War of the Worlds, part Godzilla, and part Them!, Earth Defense Force 2017 latches on to the monstrously far-fetched camp of 1950s science-fiction cinema, and embraces the role of a B-grade cult classic with its exciting alien-splattering action, astonishing city-leveling destruction, and hilarious ear-piercing screams.

Outside of "kill them all," the game really doesn't offer up much of a narrative—what is probably a good thing, as I would hate to see a writer attempt to describe how 20-story cyborg dinosaurs, sentient robots, giant acid-spewing ants, and jumping spiders are all part of the same invasion force. The miscellany of aliens is certainly odd, but you would be surprised how well they mesh together on the field of war. As a giant lizard knocks down skyscrapers with the reckless abandon of a kid kicking a can, swarms of ants scurry through the city streets, saucers hover in the sky, and spiders bounce from rooftop to rooftop.

Much like the Senoos Sam titles, the only goal that players are tasked with is to blow

possible. You can run, shoot, jump, and dive roll—all of which are handled exceptionally well. On certain levels you'll also have the chance to pilot a tank, helicopter, mech, and hoverbike—all of these are handled as poorly as possible.

There isn't much to it, but you really won't believe how much fun this silly action game can be. While embodying the highest level of cheese possible in its premise, the visuals are anything but low-budget. Errant missile blasts will send buildings crumbling to the ground. When a robot goes down, you are in for a real treat when you see the explosion that follows. You also can't help but hold your breath when a saucer the size of a football field plummets toward a bustling city.

No online functionality is included, but two players can tackle the entire game through split-screen co-op. The game also boasts longevity in an array of difficulty settings. As the game gets harder, over 150 weapons become available.

Earth Defense Force may not have the serious tones of today's triple-A juggernauts, but its quality gameplay and refreshing premise shows that a B-game can be every bit as entertaining. —REINER



I've found inspiration in the way you move.



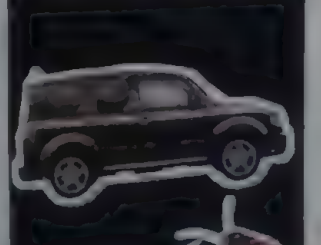
I'm not quite sure how to take that.



It's a compliment, bro. See, I've tried to mimic your responsive handling and smooth ride.



do you scatter when the kitchen light comes on, too?



©2006 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. SC model shown.



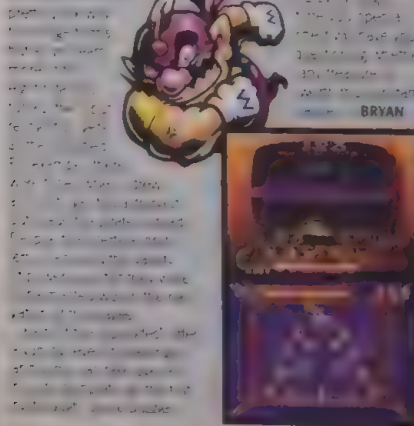
NINTENDO DS

Wario: Master of Disguise

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 6-PLAYER VIA AD HOC) > PUBLISHER: NINTENDO > DEVELOPER: GONZO > RELEASE: MARCH 20 > ESRB: E

SMELL THE PURPLE WIND

There's a purple wind blowing through the Nintendo DS game world, and it's called Wario: Master of Disguise. It's a game that's as much about the power of disguise as it is about the power of the DS. Wario, the purple pig-like character who's been a staple of Nintendo's Super Mario series since 1985, is back in a new role: a master of disguise. In this game, Wario can transform into a variety of different characters, each with their own unique abilities. The game is set in a world where Wario is the only one who can see the "purple wind," a mysterious force that's been causing trouble in the land. Wario's mission is to uncover the truth about the purple wind and stop the bad guys who are using it to their advantage.



BRYAN

BOTTOM LINE 7.25

- > **Concept:** Wario, the purple pig-like character who's been a staple of Nintendo's Super Mario series since 1985, is back in a new role: a master of disguise.
- > **Graphics:** The game's graphics are a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Sound:** The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Playability:** The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Entertainment:** The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Replay Value:** The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

Second Opinion 8

Make no mistake — this game is downright frustrating at times. While it's a mix of 2D and 3D, the game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

PSP

Call of Duty: Roads to Victory

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 6-PLAYER VIA AD HOC) > PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION > DEVELOPER: MAGE ENTERTAINMENT > RELEASE: MARCH 20 > ESRB: E



HONORABLE DISCHARGE

Call of Duty: Roads to Victory is a PSP game that's as much about the power of disguise as it is about the power of the DS. Wario, the purple pig-like character who's been a staple of Nintendo's Super Mario series since 1985, is back in a new role: a master of disguise. In this game, Wario can transform into a variety of different characters, each with their own unique abilities. The game is set in a world where Wario is the only one who can see the "purple wind," a mysterious force that's been causing trouble in the land. Wario's mission is to uncover the truth about the purple wind and stop the bad guys who are using it to their advantage.

BOTTOM LINE 6

- > **Concept:** Mortally wound a decorated war veteran by making him serve on the PSP.
- > **Graphics:** Nothing you haven't seen before.
- > **Sound:** We've heard better gun fire in our days.
- > **Playability:** FPS controls as we've come to expect on the PSP.
- > **Entertainment:** Unless you're starving for a mission, skip this poor excuse for a WWII shooter.
- > **Replay Value:** Moderate.

Second Opinion 6.5

I think it's safe to say that they're in for a rough ride with Call of Duty: Roads to Victory. The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.



PSP

After Burner: Black Falcon

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA AD HOC) > PUBLISHER: SEGA > DEVELOPER: PLANET MOON > RELEASE: MARCH 20 > ESRB: E

DANGER ZONE

After Burner was a big deal back in the day, but it's clear it has already used up most of its gas. Black Falcon clings to its roots, but struggles to keep up with the times.

BOTTOM LINE 7

- > **Concept:** Rewire this arcade classic and stay true to its roots. Add some Planet Moon humor.
- > **Graphics:** A little bland, but at least the locales show some interesting details.
- > **Sound:** The game would hang up occasionally while switching songs, but it's not as obnoxious as the bad music itself.
- > **Playability:** Fluid flying with all your weapons easily accessible at your fingertips.
- > **Entertainment:** A ray shooter whose time has pretty much come and gone.
- > **Replay Value:** Moderate.

Second Opinion 7

This remaster of the classic Sega arcade game feels like it's been around for a while. The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

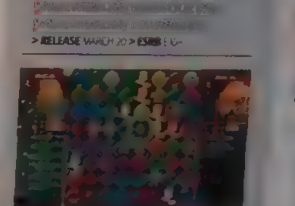


HANDHELD QUICKIES

PSP | NINTENDO DS

Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER PUZZLE (2-PLAYER VIA AD HOC) > PUBLISHER: NINTENDO > DEVELOPER: NINTENDO > RELEASE: MARCH 20 > ESRB: E



BOTTOM LINE 8.25

- > **Concept:** You could call this a strategy/puzzle/RPG. You take turns matching up lines of three or more orbs.
- > **Graphics:** Each colored orb is worth mana, which you need to cast different spells. There are also experience, gold, and attack orbs and if you don't get those, your opponent will. Then there is the matter of managing your equipment, companions, and captured cities. If I'm making this all sound a little complicated, don't worry, that's because it is. But that's part of this game's charm, and Puzzle Quest does a nice job of slowly introducing you to all these different elements. The AI seems insanely good one minute then messes an obvious attack the next, and the story is completely throwaway, but there is enough gameplay here to keep puzzle fans busy for a long time. —BEN

NINTENDO DS

Honeycomb Beat

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER ACTION > PUBLISHER: HOSION > DEVELOPER: HOSION > RELEASE: MARCH 27 > ESRB: E



BOTTOM LINE 7

There's a lot to love about this game. The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

NINTENDO DS

Meteos: Disney Magic

> STYLE: 1-PLAYER ACTION > PUBLISHER: NINTENDO > DEVELOPER: NINTENDO > RELEASE: MARCH 20 > ESRB: E



MORE BLOCKS, LESS FUN

I'm a huge fan of the original Meteos. The cartridge has never strayed far from my DS (or nowadays my DS Lite) since I bought the thing. What I hadn't realized in the last year and a half is that a substantial portion of my enjoyment of the game stems from the outstanding soundtrack that lends itself so well to each level. Meteos: Disney Magic sports nearly identical gameplay as its predecessor, but the music is so uninspired and bland that even the notable improvements to the bread and butter block-clearing can't make up for it.

BOTTOM LINE 7.75

- > **Concept:** Meteos: Disney Magic is a game that's as much about the power of disguise as it is about the power of the DS.
- > **Graphics:** The game's graphics are a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Sound:** The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Playability:** The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Entertainment:** The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.
- > **Replay Value:** The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

This version of Meteos has you holding the DS sideways like a book, which is a very natural way to play the game given the dimensions of the touch screen. This change, and the added ability to slide blocks horizontally as well as vertically, make the gameplay even better than the original's silky-smooth action. Disney Magic also features varied rulesets among its many boards, and a bunch of unlockables and bonus content to give you a reason to keep playing. All of this is great, and on paper you'd think that this spin-off trumps the original in every way. Sadly, that is not the case.

In the first game, the music consisted of brilliant original compositions that fit the tone of each level perfectly, with stings and riffs that played dynamically according to the action onscreen. Here, you get the sense that the Disney machine has ground any creativity into a thin paste between its corporate gears, leaving only bland homogenous pap deemed suitably inoffensive for youthful consumption. In short, it sucks and makes me not want to play the game. If this were an MMORPG I'd just alt-tab and fire up iTunes, but Meteos' design demands an integrated soundscape. Lacking tunes that I believe last-minute Disney Magic composers scrounged up and the 1992 Minnie Mouse twins as sequels that ought to be benched in favor of the original. —ADAM

Second Opinion 7.5

I think it's safe to say that they're in for a rough ride with Meteos: Disney Magic. The game's playability is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's sound is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's entertainment is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style. The game's replay value is a mix of 2D and 3D, with a colorful and vibrant style.

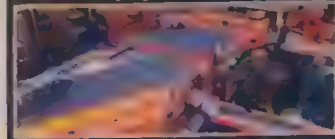


CHARTS

An In-Depth Listing Of The Best Selling Games

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For February 2007 Based On Units Sold

1 CRACKDOWN (PS3)



Not recommended. A true horror game. It all seemed good until you saw the police officer who had "read me, kid, but don't tell me I'm a monster." The police officer had "read me, kid, but don't tell me I'm a monster." The police officer had "read me, kid, but don't tell me I'm a monster."

2 WII PLAY (WII)



Shortly after that we broke up with her. We didn't like the fact that she kept beating us when we played Wii Play, and she didn't like the fact that all our friends would like her. And by beating us on Wii we mean that she would smash the Wii remote across the side of our face every time we were about to die.

3 DIDDY KONG RACING (WII)



It is probably for the best that we broke up. It was an abusive relationship. She once lost a game of Diddy Kong Racing and took out her frustration by breaking her chair across our heads and then throwing feces at us. Come to think of it, she smelled a little bit like Diddy. Except her breath, which always smelled like bananas. That was what we liked about her. Well, we were dating a monkey?

4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (WII)



Maybe we were too hard on that girl. After all, she was really good at sign language and following simple instructions. Like that time we were playing Zelda and told her to stop chewing on our hair. She really listened to us. And we learned a lot from Zelda, like, how to find the true beauty locked inside hideous people, and how to put up with them otherwise.

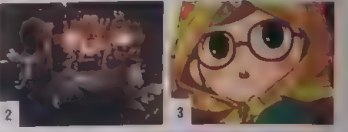
5 GUITAR HERO II (WII)



Baby, we're sorry about that time we almost sold your mother to that carnie. She looks better after the laser hair surgery. Come back to us. We'll even play you a sweet soft love song on Guitar Hero II. Something like "Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight" by Spinal Tap. Then we can lay in each other's arms. We'll say we love each other, and you can promise not to set us on fire again.

1	Crackdown	PS3	100	\$99
2	Wii Play	Wii	100	\$89
3	Diddy Kong Racing	Wii	100	\$89
4	The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Wii	100	\$89
5	Guitar Hero II	Wii	100	\$89
6	Gears of War	Xbox 360	100	\$89
7	Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	Xbox 360	100	\$89
8	Major League Baseball 2K7	PS3	100	\$89
9	WarioWare: Smooth Moves	Wii	100	\$89
10	NBA Street Homecourt	Wii	100	\$89
11	New Super Mario Bros	Wii	100	\$89
12	Rainbow Six Vegas	PS3	100	\$89
13	Sonic and the Secret Rings	Wii	100	\$89
14	Madden NFL 07	PS3	100	\$89
15	Mario Kart DS	DS	100	\$89
16	Resistance: Fall of Man	PS3	100	\$89
17	MLB 07: The Show	PS3	100	\$89
18	God of War	PS3	100	\$89
19	Final Fantasy VI Advance	DS	100	\$89
20	Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!	DS	100	\$89

Yoshi's Island DS	DS
Monster Hunter Portable 2nd	PSP
Professor Layton's Mystery Town	DS
Kenka Banchou 2: Full Throttle	PS2
Super Robot Taisen W	DS
Wii Sports	Wii
Gundam Musou	PS3
Dragon Quest Monsters Joker	DS
Wii Play	Wii
DS Training for Adults: Work Your Brain 2	DS



God of War II	PS3
The Elder Scrolls IV: Shivering Isles	PS3
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	PS3
World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade	PC
Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars	PC
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Wii
Ratchet and Clank: Size Matters	PSP
Rainbow Six Vegas	PS3
Crackdown Rainbow Six Vegas	PS3
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl	PC

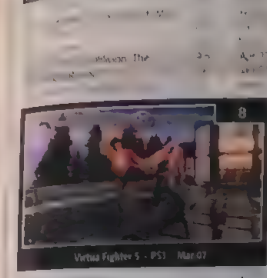


World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade	1	\$38
World of Warcraft	2	\$25
The Sims 2: Seasons	N/A	\$28
Supreme Commander	N/A	\$49
The Sims 2	4	\$41
3333 XP Games	6	\$10
The Sims: Life Stories	7	\$37
The Sims 2: Pets	8	\$30
Battlefield 2142	8	\$12
Vanguard: Saga of Heroes	7	\$49



REVIEWSARCHIVE

PLAYSTATION 3



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XBOX 360

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GAMECUBE

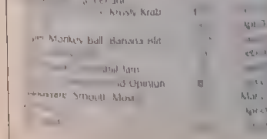
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WII

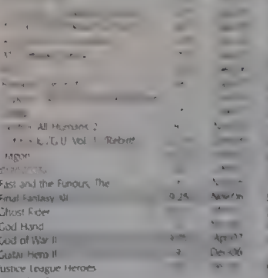
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WII

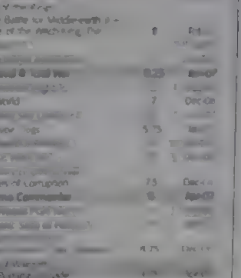
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PLAYSTATION 3



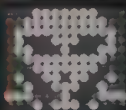
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Diddy Kong Racing	100	\$89
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	100	\$89
Guitar Hero II	100	\$89
Gears of War	100	\$89
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	100	\$89
Major League Baseball 2K7	100	\$89
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Gears of War	100	\$89
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	100	\$89
Major League Baseball 2K7	100	\$89
WarioWare: Smooth Moves	100	\$89
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New Super Mario Bros	100	\$89
Rainbow Six Vegas	100	\$89
Sonic and the Secret Rings	100	\$89
Madden NFL 07	100	\$89
Mario Kart DS	100	\$89
Resistance: Fall of Man	100	\$89
MLB 07: The Show	100	\$89
God of War	100	\$89
Final Fantasy VI Advance	100	\$89
Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!	100	\$89



SECRETACCESS

Codes, Strategies, Hints, Droids, And Tips

UNLIMITED ENABLED

Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars

We Ask The Designers Our Most Burning Questions

Answered By: Gavin Simon, AI Engineer

What's your recommended build order for each of the three playable factions, and what makes your suggested approach more efficient?

All main production structures in Command

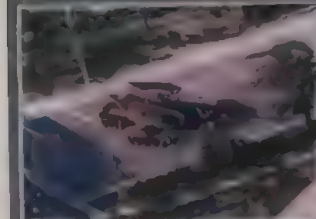


If the map has several tech structures such as Tiberium Spikes that you are interested

Refinery, Power Plant, Refinery, War Factory, Refinery, Power Plant, Refinery, War Factory

This build order works for any faction, with minor changes in the placement of your Power Plant due to the different power levels each faction's Power Plant yields.

dry. Since you can immediately construct a Surveyor vehicle (or equivalent) for base



What's the best way to use static defenses in a way that will be worth the time and effort of setting them up?

When necessary, knowing when to abandon a defensive structure on the ready at all times—specifically, guess to the type that will be the most useful based on your opponent's current

be placed in a location where they will never even be able to fire their weapons. Anti-air defenses are a little different since they're not affected by line of sight and the result they will target can approach just as effectively from any side. Therefore these defenses are best placed in the center of your base where they can cover its entire airspace.

What's your favorite sneaky tactic for each of the three factions?

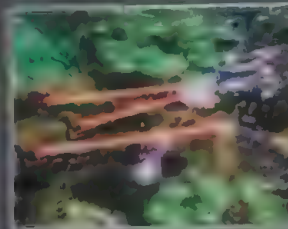
(which are cloaked) to bombard targets from extreme range, which can really catch an opponent off guard. If you see an opening and have some juggernauts anywhere on the map, use the Sharpshooter reinforcement power to

What's the best way to use static defenses in a way that will be worth the time and effort of setting them up?

like a Christmas tree.

As the Scrin, the Wormhole power available from the Signal Transmitter is one of the most

is still supported by a dedicated group of programmers who lurk in the shadows of the Internet. Knockouts like the Mystery Dungeon



ultimate late-game armored

As Mod, Avengers and Venoms upgraded with laser capacitors make for a deadly force. With the Avengers handling any armor while the

As the Scrin, Devourer Tanks and Stormriders are a great mid-game combo. With their long range and charged up cannons, the Devourers can pop the typically light anti-aircraft vehicles your opponent brings and then reverse-move

For the rest of the Q&A on how to become a master C&C3 player, check out this month's online Unlimited section.

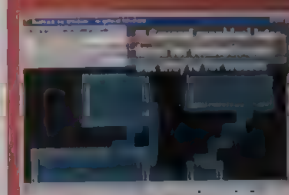
Mod World

NETHack
<http://www.retrogaming.com>



is still supported by a dedicated group of programmers who lurk in the shadows of the Internet. Knockouts like the Mystery Dungeon

is still supported by a dedicated group of programmers who lurk in the shadows of the Internet. Knockouts like the Mystery Dungeon



Contending with hunger, encumbrance, and

difficult than fending off the monsters that inhabit the depths. Nearly everything can be done in NetHack, provided you can find the command to do it—for example, there is a whole set of rules governing the inscription of the word "Elberich" (see Tolkien's writings for its meaning) as a protective ward.

(NetHack is not for the faint of heart. You'll

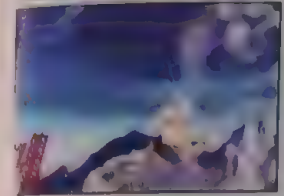


the game, though, this little ASCII dungeon simulation can be one of the deepest, richest experiences around

Attention All Cheaters!

cheat codes, by their very nature, are in cheat codes, by their very nature, are in cheat codes, by their very nature, are in

Wii



SSX Blur

can be a fun game, you can play and

Unlock All Clothes - clothshop

All Characters Unlocked - Newbie

Veil Costume - Wallbur

PSP



Capcom Puzzle World

In Super Buster Bros., at the Select Game

Level Select - Hold down and

to unlock the character. If you select the character select screen, you can select the extra

Akuma - Highlight Akuma, press down

Anita - Highlight Donovan, hold L & R

Dan - Highlight Donovan, press down, press

Devilot - Highlight Morgan, press down

Hsien-Ko's Talisman/Sister's Spirit - Highlight Hsien Ko, hold L & R, press X

Morrigan in Bat Form - Highlight

Morrigan - hold L & R, press X



EA Replay

Start up a game of Wing Commander. At the

Invincibility and Stage Select - X, O, X

X, O, X, O, R, O, Start



The Warriors

Start up a game of The Warriors. At the

99 Credits - Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right

Without pausing, enter the following cheat

100% Completion in Story Mode - L

Select, L, Down, L, Right

Complete Current Mission - Down

Get Brass Knuckles - O, O, O, L, Select, A

Get Knife - Down, L, Up, L, Up, L, Up

Get Machete - L, X, R, O, Select, R

Get Unbreakable Bat - L, L, O, Up, L

Unlimited Health - Up, A, R, Select, X, L

Unlimited Rage - O, O, O, O, Up, L

Unlock All Dealers - Right, R, O, X, Select

Unlock Hand Cuffs Keys - O, L, Select, R

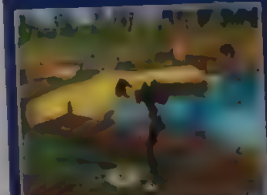
Upgrade Flash Capacity - L, X, R, L, O

Upgrade Stamina - L, X, R, L, O

Up, X

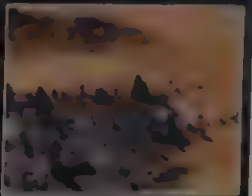
Xbox Live Arcade Spotlight

3D Ultra Minigolf Adventures



Code of the Month

Supreme Commander



These codes only work in the Single and Multiplayer modes. When using up

10,000 - CTRL+ALT+V

Easy Selected Unit/Structure - CTRL+ALT+V

Delete Selected Unit - CTRL+ALT+V

Increase Max/Energy Capacity by

Kill Selected Unit - CTRL+ALT+V

Pause Selected Unit/Structure - CTRL+SHIFT+V

Spawn Mines - ALT+V

Transport Selected Unit - ALT+V

Triple Damage Making 10 Units in the

Game Invulnerable - ALT+N

Single On/Off Opponent AI - ALT+A

Neutralize Opponent's Shields

Play the Credits

Play the Credits

Play the Credits

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CLASSICGI

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“WAR. WAR. NEVER CHANGES...”

A LOOK BACK AT THE FALLOUT SERIES



As the dulcet tones of the 1940s hit band The Ink Spots croon their romantic melody from our computer speakers, we see the black and white display of two metal-clad soldiers and an unfortunate man who kneels in front of them. They shoot him in the back of the head, then wave happily to the audience back home as the tune calmly rolls on. We pan back from the screen to see we've been watching a 1950s era TV. It sits in an empty apartment, in a blown out building, in an obliterated city. This was every player's first glance at Fallout, the 1997 role-playing game that helped to set new bars for cinematic storytelling and open-ended decision-making. With anticipation on the rise for Bethesda's announced tackling of Fallout 3, we thought we'd take a look back at this remarkable title and the series it spawned to see if Fallout still holds up 10 years after its release.



■ The Fallout series has always had some well known voice talent attached to it. The first game included cast members like Richard Dean Anderson, Tony Shalhoub, Richard Moll, and Ron Perlman, who voiced what might now be considered the catchphrase of the franchise: "War. War never changes."

Fargo in 1988 for emerging publishing giant EA. Several years later, with Interplay now a direct publishing rival, a sequel was out of the question. Its spiritual successor would come to be called Fallout. Culling inspiration from movies like *Mad Max* and books such as Stephen King's *The Stand* and Robert R. McCammon's *Swan Song*, Fargo began work on a 10-point vision for what Fallout should become. Early on, that concept became a united focus for the major creative voices that would shape the title — Feargus Urquhart, Tim Cain, Leonard Boyarsky, and Jason D. Anderson. "It was definitely a shared vision. It's hard to create great product unless you have a group of people who are passionate about what they're doing," Fargo tells us, crediting such innovations as the retro '50s art style to Boyarsky. "That's the good thing about the creative process. If you get everybody involved at the right levels and let the right ideas rise to the top, you get something greater than any one person could do."

The game that emerged was unlike its contemporary RPGs in more ways than one. Set in a dark prediction of the 22nd century, Fallout satiated that strange era of post-WWII Cold War fears, with its xenophobic bomb shelters and falsely optimistic promises of life after the

next great war. Players adopted the role of a vault dweller, one of the lucky survivors who had gotten into a vast underground facility before the nuclear holocaust that devastated the world. When the vault's water chip breaks, someone must venture into the outside world for the first time in years to find a replacement. In the desolate waste that used to be southern California, players could wander in any direction they wanted to complete their quest, and engage in any number of shady and questionable tactics to succeed. "We wanted to have moral ambiguity wherever we could," Fargo relays. "The world is not black and white. So we loved putting people in situations where they're torn as to what to do." One scene in the game allowed gamers to play the local organized crime boss against the police. You could complete several assassinations for the dangerous mob leader, collect the cash, then run to the police and turn over evidence, carefully leaving out your involvement in the killings. Scenes like these were a far cry from the



know is how close the game came to using an already popularized RPG system. "We actually had a deal with Steve Jackson Games. We were going to use GURPS [Generic Universal Role-Playing System]," reveals Fargo. "What happened was that we started giving him things to look at, including the famous opening sequence with the Ink Spots and shooting the guy, which we just thought was a wonderful moment." For

reared up out of the wastelands, it was the vault dweller that had to step up and find a solution.

Fallout played as a straightforward turn-based RPG. Players were free to wander until combat began, when a regimented action point system would dictate how far someone could move in a turn, and what attacks or other actions they could take. Bearing everything from crowbars and sledgehammers to sniper rifles and plasma pistols, combat rolled forward through visceral descriptions of different attacks scrolling into the lower window and frequent gory death animations. Backing up this smooth combat interface was a character creation and upgrade system specially designed for Fallout — SPECIAL, an acronym that relayed a character's strength, perception, endurance, charisma, intelligence, agility, and luck. A set of point-based skills and special powers called perks rounded out the character, a herald of some of the most popular RPG systems of later years. What many people don't

Jackson, it was a level of violence he was unwilling to be associated with, and demanded that it be removed. Fargo continues: "That moment defines the title. That is what this title is about. So I said, 'You know what? We're going to cancel the license.' So that's why we just walked away. As much as we respected Steve Jackson Games and the GURPS system, we just weren't going to compromise the integrity of what we wanted to create with Fallout."

With the success of the first game, it wasn't long before talk of a second title began to surface. To hear Brian Fargo tell it, it was a challenging time at Interplay. "It was a real rough start on that one — and very frustrating for me," Fargo tells us. "Fallout 2 was very painful to get going." By Fargo's account, the second project began with Cain, Boyarsky, and Anderson beginning work on ideas other than Fallout, such that some of the rank and file members of the original team were thrust into the role of starting a sequel. A few months later, Fargo details that the original designers returned, only to scrap most of the work the rest of the team had started on. And only a few months after that, those key development figures told Fargo they would be leaving to start their own company, Troika, at which point creative control reverted to the team that had first begun work on the sequel. For their part, the founders of Troika have previously been on record as being unable to agree with Interplay about how the team for a sequel would be structured — they were unhappy with the direction Interplay was going at the time, and ready to pursue their own ventures. Regardless of disagreements and splits at the company, Fallout 2 was eventually released on a hungry fan base to largely positive reviews. Some



■ Fallout had multiple endings, each of which reflected a different play style and approach to the moral conundrums of the game



■ Combat was turn-based and extremely challenging, with enemies that ranged from human raiders to giant super mutants



■ In Fallout 1 and 2, players could recruit a number of characters into their party who would independently act to help out in a fight



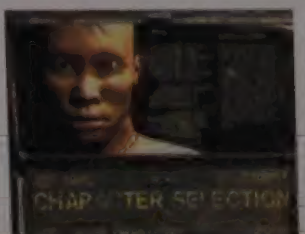
■ Vault 13 was the starting point of the game — a giant underground shelter where survivors of a nuclear holocaust had lived for years

same art assets and gameplay, it included even more complicated moral dilemmas, dealing with prostitution, drug use, and contract killing as major elements in the world. With the freedom to explore these and any number of other options, Fallout 2 advanced the concept put forth in its predecessor — let the player do what he or she wants. It was a concept that would come to dominate North American RPG design in the coming years.

Other games would follow in the coming



■ The main character of the second game was a descendant of the original hero, and like his ancestor begins his mission to save his isolated home



■ The SPECIAL character system was flexible and well balanced, even if some of the skills seemed to have more value and importance than others

years. Fallout: Tactics, developed by a new studio called Micro Forté, focused on a much more strategic approach to the post-nuclear universe, saw a console release in 2004. However, for fans, the most exciting news for the franchise is still on

its way. In mid-2004, Bethesda, creators of the renowned Elder Scrolls franchise, announced it had acquired the rights to create new Fallout games from the financially troubled Interplay. Details on the game remain under wraps other than hints that the game will utilize an approach similar to Bethesda's *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. We interviewed Todd Howard, executive producer at Bethesda on Fallout 3, and asked him his thoughts about the original games. "Fallout was the kind of game we love — you make a character you want, and then go do whatever you want. And it rewarded you for doing so. Want to start shooting everyone and play the game that way? Go for it," Howard tells us. "Add to that one of the most unique gameworlds ever conceived — the perfect mix of retro-'50s science-fiction optimism and the harsh aftermath of a nuclear war, and you get a game like no other."

As the former head of the company that first began the Fallout franchise, we asked Brian Fargo about his thoughts on Bethesda and their handling of the new game. "There are not that many companies that could take that legacy and run with it. I think they're a great fit for it. I'm glad it ended up there." With the blessing of one of its original creators intact, it remains to be seen exactly what directions Bethesda will take the fan favorite franchise. With such a rabid following invested in the series a full decade after its first release, we questioned Fargo about what makes the games so memora-

ble. "To me it was the open world environment, the true sense of cause and effect, the acting was very strong, the writing was just perfect, it had a great ending — it was the perfect storm of all those things, and there was really nothing else like it at the time. It was something unique." ■ ■ ■

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Javier Gutierrez

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

3-FEBRUARY 2004
PUBLISHER: BETHESDA

The greatest game of all time is *Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*. This game looked dumb when I saw the cover, but when I started to read the back of the game it looked sweet. This was the first RPG I had ever played. Before that I did not know what an RPG was. You can do anything in this game — if you do not have any weapons, you steal some from a shop. You can travel a huge world that you are never bored in because you always have something to do. Every character has their own special abilities. You can be a cat-like person, a lizard, a monk, an elf, and other characters. This game has great graphics for the time and PC — this was the first game I played.

This is a good game with a good story. You live your own life. You change with every action you do. This game sounds like *Fable*, but it's way better with a bargain price. *Fable* was a big disappointment. *Elder Scrolls III* was the game of the year and *Fable* was not. It has won much respect from RPG fans. This game has everything. It has ghosts, monsters, zombies, vampires, and huge creatures. It also has tunnels, caves, huge waters, huge lands — there is everything in this game. It's a fun game to play if you like RPGs. This game is what made me a gamer. It has lands that take longer than a week to travel to. You will never feel bored when you play this game. *Elder Scrolls* should be named the greatest RPG of the last generation. If you don't know what an RPG is, pick up a copy of this game and it will show you what an RPG is. This is my favorite game of all time and is my favorite RPG of all time.

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

May of 1998 saw the release of *Panzer Dragoon Saga* for the Saturn, often hailed as the finest example of a role-playing game to ever grace a Sega system (sorry, Shenmue fans). The huge four-disc game detailed a story about a boy named Ridge and his dragon companion. With a combat system that combined traditional menu navigation with light simulation, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* stood apart from its RPG contemporaries.



SNES

PILOTWINGS

> STYLE 1-PLAYER SIMULATION > PUBLISHER NINTENDO > DEVELOPER NINTENDO > RELEASE 1991

Have you ever dreamed of flying? Do you dare to take the first steps to earn your license? So begins this classic flight simulator that many received packed in with their SNES so many years ago. Pilotwings is probably best known for its liberal use of Mode 7 scaling and rotating. The game isn't true 3D so all the scenery is painted to the ground, but there is a certain charm to this. Like all older games that tried to simulate 3D, the controls take some getting used to, but Pilotwings manages to pull them off better than a lot of those others did, and you get the hang of it in no time. That doesn't mean the game gets easy. In earning your wings you'll get to pilot planes, gliders, jetpacks, and parachute out of the sky. Landing is always the hardest part, and oddly enough nailing the landing is what keeps you coming back. There are only 8 lessons and 2 bonus missions, but retrying the challenges to get better scores is what gives this game some legs. Even after all these years, maybe your dream of flying can come true.



RETRO RATING
NOW 8.25
THEN N/A



PC

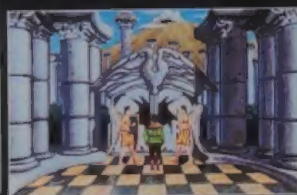
KING'S QUEST VI: HEIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

> STYLE 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE > PUBLISHER SIERRA > DEVELOPER SIERRA > RELEASE 1992

If you ever hear people say how they miss the glory days of adventure gaming, King's Quest VI is precisely the kind of title they're pining for. Before Warcraft and The Sims, King's Quest was one of the biggest franchises on the PC. Telling the tale of a young Prince stranded on a cluster of fantastic islands, this entry exemplifies everything that was great about adventure gaming. Unlike some recent adventure games, KQ VI doesn't resort to obtuse inventory puzzles; there is a logical way around everything barring your progression, assuming you can obtain the right items. Throw iceberg lettuce into the boiling pond, use a red scarf to agitate the minotaur, and paint a magical door on the blank castle wall. Intuitive and perfectly paced, this was the final KQ to use the "move, look, take, and talk" interface that was rampant in the early '90s. Thankfully, Vivendi recently released a compilation of the first seven King's Quest titles that runs on Windows XP, so now is a great time to go back and revisit this classic.



RETRO RATING
NOW 9.5
THEN N/A



NES

TECMO SUPER BOWL

> STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS > PUBLISHER TECMO > DEVELOPER TECMO > RELEASE 1991

While the original Tecmo Bowl may be remembered as the first great console football title, its successor, Tecmo Super Bowl, is the franchise's crown jewel. TSB was the first football game to incorporate every NFL team, offer a full season of gameplay, allow in-game substitutions, and record a full season's worth of statistics. Do these features sound familiar to you Madden fans? The game brings you back to a golden era of the NFL, when the Patriots and Colts still sucked and players had Mad Libs names like Louis Lipps, Babe Laufenberg, and Ickey Woods. Taking your favorite team through a season is still a blast, even if it essentially boils down to padding stats against the inferior AI. Watching players bounce off bruising running backs like Christen "The Nigerian Nightmare" Okoye and stapling quarterbacks to the turf still hasn't gotten old, even though the gameplay is much more simplistic than current football games. Playing against other humans is even better, which is why so many competitive emulation leagues can be found online. This is the kind of game destined for a rebirth on Xbox Live Arcade or the PlayStation Network. Come on Tecmo, what are you waiting for?



RETRO RATING
NOW 9.5
THEN N/A



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UNLIMITED LAUNCH: APR. 23

ALL-PRO FOOTBALL 2K8



Disenchanted Madden fans and ESPN NFL 2K5 faithful will want to check out our full interview with Visual Concepts president Greg Thomas, where he dishes the knowledge about 2K Sports' newest football title and more.



Fallout Windfall

Miller sits down with Interplay founder and current inXile CEO Brian Fargo to reminisce about the production of the critically acclaimed post-apocalyptic game franchise Fallout.



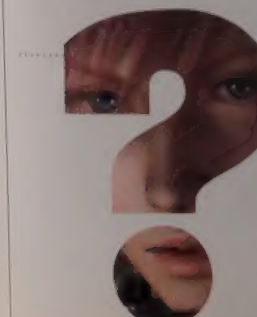
Start Your Engines

Forza Motorsport 2 game director Dan Greenawalt filled us in with the latest intel on Microsoft's highly anticipated racer. Read the full interview online.



Touch The Dead

"Who cares about box art," you say? We do, especially when we get the chance to speak briefly with Touch The Dead artist Arthur Suydam, the comic book illustrator best known for his cover work for Marvel Zombies.



ALSO ONLINE THIS MONTH:

Game Informer Online travels the world to cover the circuit of gamers' days. Learn all about new game announcements from publishers like Sony, EA, Capcom, and Sony Online Entertainment. Billy and Nick also head to Japan to cover a special event hosted by Square Enix that promises a big reveal. Our fingers are crossed for a new Final Fantasy.

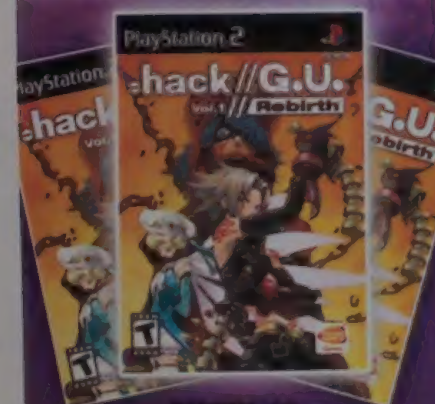
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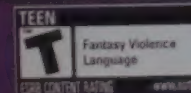


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GAMEOVER

"What A Terrible Night For A Curse"

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Video game stars aren't all about action – they're also about style. Character designers make sure that our protagonists are wielding the coolest weapons and wearing the hottest duds. Unfortunately, one key accessory is often left out: the hat. Answer the questions below to determine which degrading and humiliating noggin-topper we put on Ben!

1 We all know that Dante's pistols are called Ebony and Ivory, but as an unlockable character in the first Devil May Cry, Sparda's guns also have unique names. What are they?

- A. Luce and Ombra
- B. Dante and Vergil
- C. Mary Kate and Ashley
- D. Salvation and Perdition

4 What MMORPG terminology is also the name of the Wanderer's horse in Shadow of the Colossus?

- A. Mankrik's Wife
- B. Aggro
- C. Dot
- D. Buff



5 In Metal Gear Solid 3, what is the The Boss' code name among the Cobras, signifying the emotion she carries into battle?

- A. The Sorrow
- B. The Rage
- C. The Joy
- D. The Peace

6 What was Sega's not-so-revolutionary technology that, according to the marketing for Sonic the Hedgehog 2, allowed the Genesis to handle the game's extreme speed?

- A. Blast Processing
- B. Burst Processing
- C. Blink Processing
- D. Burrito Processing



3 In Tomb Raider II for the PSone, what is the setting for the first level?

- A. Atlantis
- B. The canals of Venice
- C. The Amazon jungle
- D. The Great Wall of China

7 Playing your favorite shows must be better than watching them, right? Which of these current TV programs does not already have a video game adaptation on retail shelves?

- A. Battlestar Galactica
- B. Lost
- C. CSI Miami
- D. 24

8 This screen is taken from what NES game controlled via the Zapper?

- A. Hogan's Alley
- B. Duck Hunt
- C. Gumshoe
- D. Operation Wolf

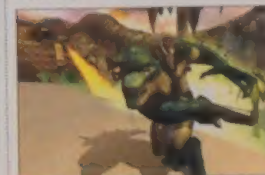


9 Only one of the following games was made by BioWare, the developer known for titles like Jade Empire and Mass Effect. Which one is it?

- A. Full Throttle
- B. Rise of the Robots
- C. MDK2
- D. Icewind Dale

10 True or False: Brute Force?

- A. False



BREAKDOWN

99.9% of gamers just don't care about Radagast the Brown

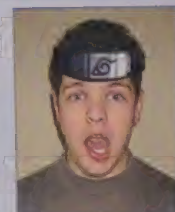
7.5 Million ants, all piled up and pressing against your front door, still probably couldn't break it down

4 points is not very many points

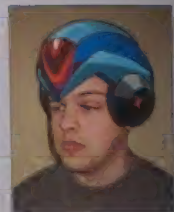
18% of your skin is actually made of paper. That's why you are able write on it with pens and markers

80% of this month's Breakdown facts are either made up or inaccurate. This is the one exception

★ Trivia Score & Rank ★



0-1:
Naruto's Headband



2-3:
Nega Man's Dumb Helmet



4-5:
ICO Horns



6-7:
Tingle's Unkard



8-9:
Daxter



10:
Green Bay Packers Helmet

Dell recommends Windows Vista™ Home Premium.

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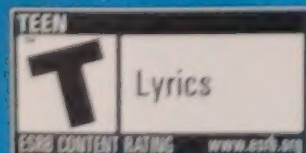
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